

FROM THE PULPIT TO THE PEWS: PASTORAL
CARE FOR THOSE SUFFERING FROM
GRIEF AND LOSS

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
DEDICATION	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1. MINISTRY FOCUS	6
2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	19
New Testament	
Conclusion	
3. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS	36
Historical Patterns of Child Abandonment	
African-American Orphanages	
Church and Community Response	
4. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	50
Pastoral Care in Theology	
Theology of Ministry	
Silence Is Not Golden	
Rituals Are Not for Children Only	
5. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	71
Children and Grief	

	Church Models	
	African-American Faith Based Bereavement Initiative	
	Education Framework	
	Framework for Ministry	
	Sesame Street Community	
	Funding Partners	
6.	PROJECT ANALYSIS	87
	Methodology	
	Implementation	
	Summary of Learning	
	Conclusion	
APPENDIX		
A.	ANTICIPATED LEARNINGS	95
B.	PASTORAL CARE SURVEY	97
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	101

ABSTRACT

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The contextual settings were New Zion and Pleasant Hill in Savannah and Atlanta, Georgia, two churches in urban and rural settings. The problem is these churches have relied on their pastors as the sole source of spiritual support and care to members suffering in silence. The hypothesis is African-American pastors in rural and urban settings can generate an awareness of the urgent need for care giving ministries, then congregants will not totally rely on pastors. Five leaders demonstrated an interest in starting a care giving ministry. The measurement for this project was pre and post survey, observation, and questionnaires.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author began by saying to God be the Glory for all that God has done. I want to acknowledge all those persons who contributed to the completion of this project. I need to begin with my wife, Jane. Since the day I saw a side view of her standing in the graduation line at our baccalaureate service of our high school in May 1980; I knew she was the one for me. Her beauty, poise and class have inspired and motivated me throughout these years to rise to her expectation of being better than what I thought of myself. She would often remind me, baby; it is not where you come from, but it is where you are going. Together we have been able to rise above many trials and adversities.

To my children Edward III, Daniele Fawn and Jordan Ashley you three have made me proud to be called daddy. Close behind have been my mentors, Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis and Dr. Thomas L. Francis. They both had a way of challenging me, bringing out the best in me and giving me the confidence that they and God would get me through this process. Dr. Jerome Stevenson thank you, after listening to me you said, “Ed you are in the right place.” I have used this time and place to get my mind, body, and soul ready and willing and able to do ministry. To serve this present age my calling to fulfill.

I need to thank my professional associates, Rev. Dr. Ronald Dunnigan, Rev. Dr. Sandra Avent and my context associate Rev. Barnard Bryant. Each of them took painstaking time to read through my drafts and give grammatical feedback. A big thank

you to Dr. Michael Williams, a therapist as well as good friend, he brought a different, neutral, objective and honest source of feedback to this work.

I am grateful for all my colleagues in the Pastoral Care and Counseling small group, especially my peer associate, David Wickins for his thoughts and feedback as a peer and support. I grew to expect a text message from David after difficult sessions in this process “Ed you OK.”

I would be remiss not to thank my family; sister, cousins, son in law, daughter in law and friends for their prayers and reminders to let them know I arrived at my destination during my travel these three years in this program, again To God be the Glory for all that God has done.

A final thank you to all at United Theological Seminary, President Dr. Kent Millard who always inspire the students and to Janice Kronour, and staff who kept everything headed in the right direction, to Dr. Harold Hudson who I met at Hampton Ministers conference and he steered me in the right direction to the Pastoral Care and Counseling Small Group. Again, To God be the Glory.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my grandparents and my parents, Rev. Benson and Ola Macon and Edward F. Carroll, Sr. and Ola Mae Macon Carroll. Who would have thought that God would take a little boy from the streets of Rossignol Hill? God allowed him to be born to two teenage parents, adopted by his grandparents reared in a Christian home and prepared him to do ministry for such a time as this. To God be all the glory honor and praise. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

African-American church pastors in rural and urban settings have an urgent need for care giving ministries that address the pastoral care needs of those suffering from crisis resulting from grief and loss. African American churches have, historically, relied primarily on their pastors as the sole source of spiritual support and care in all aspects of church and community life. This ministry project examined and brought awareness to the challenge's pastors face as the sole source of Pastoral Care and provided learning opportunities for whole congregations to become communities that truly care for their members. Pastors and laypeople within my context, like many other congregations in rural and small church settings, have very little exposure to the formal and informal aspects of pastoral caregiving. The United Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program has proven to be the ideal framework to explore the realities and challenges in bringing awareness to pastors in rural and urban settings who have an urgent need for care giving ministries that address the pastoral care needs. God has always endowed me with compassion for the elderly, the disenfranchised and animals. As a child, after my parents separated, I grew up living with my grandparents.

My life reflects God's intervention and involvement throughout this journey. I had more than my share of grief from death and dying. My earliest memory is playing on my grandmother's porch in the August summer heat one dark evening. I gazed inside only to see a blue veil covering a grey coffin, and it raised my curiosity. I do not know

how or why, but I knew that loss or lack was a part of this strange event. The adults were inside, and the conversations were loud. My dad said I was too young to remember that because I was three years old at the time, but I do remember; it was my first memory of standing on the outside looking in and wondering what was next. This was the death of my paternal grandfather who died from lung cancer. As I stated this was the beginning of many relatives, friends and acquaintances that passed on through sickness, tragic death, accidents, or murder. As the years progressed, we had to conduct funerals of many loved ones. To sum it up, on my maternal side, I have seen and participated in the death and burial of my grandparents, my mother and all her six brothers and sisters and a few younger cousins. On my paternal side, I have witnessed the death and burial of my dad his parents, and his three brothers.

The ministry focus chapter of the research will begin with my own observations of my journey growing up at New Zion Baptist Church and how it became an important part of my quest to change margins, or perceived limits, in my community. I served in my grandfather church on the usher board and youth ministry. I came to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior at the age of nine. I was active in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and Baptist Training Union (BTU). These provided me with ample opportunity to learn the plan of salvation and develop my faith in Christ. I enjoyed the summer trips and buying candy after Sunday school at the corner store on Sunday. Through my active involvement in my church's youth group as well as opportunities for volunteer services, I began to sense God's direction into ministry. It was during my years in college that God's calling became clear to me. It was also clear that I always had a profound sadness at

church. I would be sitting there hurting and crying but fighting back tears for fear of embarrassing my family with visible emotions.

Chapter two, the biblical foundation is grounded in Isaiah 49:15-16. Can a woman forget her sucking child—God is often represented as bearing a fatherly affection toward his people, but here the comparison is raised higher, and he speaks of himself as having a tenderness for them, like that which a mother hath toward the fruit of her womb. “The image is common and frequent with so much elegance expressed in such terms, that nothing can exceed it in beauty and grace period. Nothing can express a stronger idea than the maternal regard, which God has for his people. The New Testament passage, Ephesian 6:1-4, The great duty of children is to obey their parents. That obedience includes inward reverence, as well as outward acts, and in every age, prosperity has attended those distinguished for obedience to parents. The duty of parents is to be not impatient; use no unreasonable severities. Deal prudently and wisely with children; convince their judgements and work upon their reason. Bring them up well; under proper and compassionate correction; and in the knowledge of the duty God requires. Often is this duty neglected, even among professors of the gospel. Many set their children against religion; but this does not excuse the children's disobedience, though it may be awfully occasion it. God alone can change the heart, yet he gives his blessing to the good lessons and examples of parents and answers their prayers.

Chapter three is the historical foundation study showed that child abandonment is nothing new. A little history lesson will go a long way in understanding today's situation and the church's place in it. As I study the topic of child abandonment, most of my research correlates child abandonment with child abuse i.e. sexual, verbal and physical.

Child abandonment is the practice of relinquishing interests and claims over one's offspring in an extralegal way with the intent of never again resuming or reasserting them. Causes include many social and cultural factors as well as mental illness. An abandoned child is called a foundling (as opposed to a runaway or an orphan).

Chapter four, the theological foundations, brings awareness and states that grief and bereavement need great care and judgement. When we lose someone, we love or experience a loss of something that we hold very dear by abandonment or death, we tend to fall into a state of grief. Grief can be felt as mental anguish, sorrow, or profound sadness. Grief is a normal response to a deeply felt loss. Grief is singular, often lonely experience for each person. No two people or children grieve alike. Many children who suffer the loss of a parent or someone they love often are left to grieve in silence. It seems both an obvious and unassailable fact that children will suffer, sometimes acutely, from the loss of important figures in their lives; yet it was not long ago that such profound sorrow was not widely acknowledged.

Chapter five, the theoretical foundations, states that loss is tough and everyone handles loss and grief differently. I am persuaded that nobody handles it easily and especially, not children. Respectively, cultures grieve differently when dealing with losses. How and to whom we ascribe ourselves differs from one culture to another. For example, in the African-American community, it is not unusual for “play”-kin to be granted honorary kin status—and operate as family. These behaviors date back to slavery when individuals were separated from birth relatives and had to create close bonds with others to survive, making them family. Even then, such losses created a brokenness that created a continual search for family. Thereby, creating the dynamic in black churches that

rely so heavily on the concept of family within the church. This helps to create the need for the church to be a place and source for healing.

Chapter six is the project analysis which demonstrates the notion that ministers can work together to learn and to share time and place. First, given the fact that Baptist churches are not considered to be connectional church like Methodist or Catholic, rather they are independently organized and operated on the local church level. They are not governed by bishops or presiding elders who can direct ministers to work together, they are not compelled in any way to cooperate with any movement or cause. Nevertheless, this project validates that ministers can mobilize to address the issues of grief and loss to project their respective congregations who are suffering from damage and harm. When a cause such as grief or loss become an urgent and common problem for congregations, ministers stepped up to share their location and valuable time and resources to address these problems to overcome the despair of their flocks. Moreover, they are willing to learn from experts because they know that these problems are larger than their abilities or expertise to address alone; they are acknowledging their ignorance and humbling themselves to cover their congregations. The results of the project demonstrated positive results and brought awareness and ministry inquiry for support in their local congregations. This was a healing moment for me as well as a motivator for continued workshops past the Doctor of Ministry Project.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

God has always endowed me with compassion for the elderly, the disenfranchised and animals. As a child, after my parents separated, I grew up living with my grandparents. I was blessed to have the support of my uncles and aunts. My school clothing for many years was more-or-less a family project; one family would buy the shoes and sneakers, and another family would buy pants and shirts, while yet another provided me with winter coats when I needed them. The kindness of my relatives truly made me feel blessed but over time and as I became older, I inadvertently began to develop a sense of shame resulting from the handouts.

I constantly prayed and asked God to allow me to get old enough to work and take care of myself, and I believe my prayers were answered when I started my first job at fifteen and have consistently kept a job since then. I was taught to pray and bless my nights, my days, and my food. I grew up hearing my grandfather intercede on behalf of the family. We prayed the New Year in and woke up heaven and earth shooting our shotguns celebrating the New Year. This tradition is rooted in the belief system that is forward-looking toward to renewing, recreating, and revitalizing anything that was lacking, lost, or just did not work. It has also taught me the good lesson of learning from my past as a stepping stone for my future. Regardless of my life experiences, whether

good or bad, joy or sorrow, tears or disappointments, accomplishments, or defeats, God reminds me that something better is going to happen next.

My life reflects God's intervention and involvement throughout this journey. I had more than my share of grief from death and dying. My earliest memory is playing on my grandmother's porch in the August summer heat one dark evening. I gazed inside only to see a blue veil covering a grey coffin, and it raised my curiosity. I do not know how or why, but I knew that loss or lack was a part of this strange event. The adults were inside, and the conversations were loud. My dad said I was too young to remember that because I was three years old at the time, but I do remember; it was my first memory of standing on the outside looking in and wondering what was next. This was the death of my paternal grandfather who died from lung cancer. As I stated this was the beginning of many relatives, friends and acquaintances that passed on through sickness, tragic death, accidents, or murder. As the years progressed, we conducted funerals of many loved ones. To sum it up, on my maternal side, I have seen and participated in the death and burial of my grandparents, my mother and all of her six brothers and sisters and a few younger cousins. On my paternal side, I witnessed the death and burial of my dad his parents, and his three brothers.

New Zion Baptist Church became an important part of my quest to change margins, or perceived limits, in my community. I served in my grandfather church on the usher board and youth ministry. I came to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior at the age of nine. I was active in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and Baptist Training Union (BTU). These provided me with ample opportunity to learn the plan of salvation and develop my faith in Christ. I enjoyed the summer trips and buying candy

after Sunday school at the corner store on Sunday. Through my active involvement in my church's youth group as well as opportunities for volunteer services, I began to sense God's direction into ministry. It was during my years in college that God's calling became clear to me.

The concept of association was designed to provide partnerships and opportunities for ministry by engaging in local, state, national, and international missions and ministry. Associations are supposed to give support and training to churches and leaders. The association model should give local Baptist churches the opportunity, means, and ability to work together to provide ministry on a larger scale.

Historically, the outstanding components of black Baptist conventions have always been missions and education. The history of the convention reflects the response of the Negro Baptists of Georgia to the challenge and opportunities of the times. In 1880, when the call went out for the formation of the National Baptist Convention, Georgia leaders were prominent in the organization and development although the second session of the convention was held in Nashville in 1881.¹ Leaders in Georgia have always been closely linked with national Baptist activity, and several national agency headquarters are in the state. Currently, there are many associations affiliated with the Baptist Missionary and Educational Conventions throughout the state.

Hopewell Association church properties are typically underutilized, but often play a key role in community work and events in our neighborhoods. Many community meetings or social gatherings are held at local churches and local pastors are the natural resource for inquiry. Hopewell meetings are held bi-monthly with an annual session

¹ "Convention History," Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, Inc.—Convention History, accessed May 23, 2018, <http://www.tbmec.org/about-us/convention-history.html>.

hosted yearly. We tend to be more focused on events than we are on programs. I would like to see some form of intervention to get to the emotional causes of the person's issues. Much of the work and the financial support are done to meet requirements for the mission's programs; a group of programs on paper that never seem to have real results. While we do have great intentions, the work often fails because of a lack of leadership in program development and financial commitment to programming. Each community area presents many of the same needs. This project will seek to identify skills, talents, and passions of congregations in social service outreach, while utilizing the association concept as the means for service delivery.

Most of the target area consists of residents that live within the Gwinnett communities even though many of them work in urban settings. This church ministry is different from ministry in urban communities, and while most of the communities are located within thirty minutes or less from major urban areas, they like being in the suburbs. Suburban life and community must be recognized within the understanding of the project focus and work of ministry as this will affect data collection and the tools used to collect them.

Ministry in this community is different, and those working and building in this context find it personal and sometimes limiting. The unique personalities of people residing in these areas can bring additional challenges for those living, working, and worshipping there. Common themes include separation due to lack of public transport and distance to services or resources.

The extent and scope of churches' participation in supporting social services has become a matter of community concern. We also have challenges with only spotty

involvement; many churches in our association provide occasional volunteers but do not take on any major responsibilities. Pastoral Care would be an asset as a form of intervention. We make contributions to national disasters, and send representatives to mission trips, but we have not challenged ourselves through dialogue or research to address community emotional needs. We also have never conducted an evaluation of services that are provided in the community, neither by the church nor the local agencies.

There seems to be a lack of communication at the local church and association levels. Church pastors and leaders often assume that the members know what is going on, or they form the assumption that members do not care. Lack of support for ministries is directly related to lack of knowledge or involvement. Most of the time, the representative for meetings is the pastor, although the pastor never really gets to do the real work; someone else ultimately gets assigned. Collaborative work will require change and acceptance; collaborative church work in rural communities involves removing the gates that limit access in communities.

Many denominations have national, not-for-profit charities that provide social services across the country, but the national Baptist denomination does not have a recognized structure. They do have national missions' programs, but they seem to lack real structure or focus. The proposed model would work with para-church organizations and local churches in a directed plan to help those in need. Creating an effective ministry model will offer various opportunities for individuals and groups within the church congregation, as well as ministry focus, for associate ministers seeking direction, and will provide meaning to many in congregations who are certain of their call to serve and want to do something but have no idea what to do. Utilizing the existing support network of

para-church organizations can provide information, training, and resources for local outreach efforts.

The context of this work is directly related to my professional work over the years. My job in social services involved working for the Tidelands Mental Health Clinic, traveling the city, and providing advocacy information for people who had issues with mental health and housing with special emphasis on youth ages six to eighteen. I became the liaison for several African American families who had active state approve foster care homes. I was then called to pastor Mt. Zion Baptist Church; the church was located on the main street in the center of Savannah. We immediately started a tutorial and after school lunch program for the community kids from the housing project across the street. I enjoyed working toward change.

Later, my employment with the Chatham County Board of Education, and with the Memorial Medical Center as an on-call Chaplain helped me gain clarity about my understanding of needs and the urgency of health care. Further, seeking a clear focus, I engaged in addressing the challenges of urban communities in Atlanta, working for the Prison Fellowship Ministry. In this ministry, I was the executive director. I supervised area directors in four states. I developed and formed ministry and Bible study groups to go in the federal and state prison in Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi to offer God to the inmates in a multi-cultural setting while meeting each facility at their point of need. The question that I had to struggle with was what to do next; I had to wait on God to speak. Then to move, and finally I needed to act under the divine direction of God. As I struggled, each new level of spiritual growth gave me a greater assurance that God does and will supply our every need. I had a tremendous task during the Christmas

season because we did the angel tree project for children of inmates. After numerous conversations with the Lord and months of recruiting volunteers and churches, we would always meet our goals. I had a greater assurance in God. In fact, God showed me his hand repeatedly in this position. Moreover, I remember when there were two days before the ministry closed for Christmas and there were 800 children in South Georgia with no sponsors. I said a prayer and my secretary knocked on my door and said I had a visitor. It was a short, grey-headed Caucasian man who said he was led to come and donate. He asked if we have any immediate needs. I said yes, I have 800 kids in South Georgia who have not been sponsored for Christmas. Then he asked whether \$7,500 will handle the need. I said, "Yes! We would do gift cards and mail them to a church to distribute to the families along with gifts from Toys R Us and Walmart." Eventually, God amazingly provided exactly what we needed in this situation.

While in seminary, I needed to work, so I took a position as an interim pastor at a Presbyterian Church. I worked in downtown Savannah, which also had the largest concentration of public housing. The primary goal was to assist residents in building, repairing, and restoring their neighborhoods, and in addition to that, my overarching goal was to create opportunities for self-awareness and community renewal that benefited those living in substandard conditions. I wanted to teach this congregation to be involved and not just write a check.

Attending the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) was a great experience; it was seminary that helped me realize that preachers, professors, teachers, and especially seminarians, are very human. ITC helped me grow in ways that could only be reflections of God's illumination with an array of consequences infused in my spirit. I

purposely sought out Dr. Charles Sargent for his wisdom as a powerful preaching theologian. His teachings were reflective of inclusion and acceptance all in one. The Black Church and Society groups brought scholars from around the country to aid in the development and support of all students, but especially the African American students. My understanding and relationship with Christ had become a reliable place from which I felt empowered to engage freely, raise suspicions, ask question, and request answers, as well as explore new dimensions. I was learning that my doubts often supported my faith. At ITC, many of my professors afforded me the chance to become my own critic, while exploring fairness and rights. Often, I was content to be still and wait for whatever God's love would throw my way.

After completing this stage of my theological education, I established Nehemiah Ministries and collaborated with the Baptist Church Association in Atlanta. We worked primarily to support community efforts still in an urban context. This mission was all a part of God's directed plan, which included working with and reorganizing the NAACP branch in our area. Our political efforts resulted in the election of the first black county mayor in Lithonia. This clearly demonstrates that we were different in our aims and objectives and simply effective at creating change.

Nehemiah Ministries is a support ministry that I started to aid the community. Our aim is to assist the homeless and those who have co-occurring issues of alcohol or drug abuse, and or mental illness. Nehemiah is a young ministry, and we are limited in what we can do to meet the massive needs of our targeted population. The numbers appear overwhelming, and the needs are great. However, one of the best parts of my calling is serving as a personal witness for Jesus Christ and sharing the gospel. It is the

personal touch of delivery of this ministry that creates connections for families and individuals who buy medicines, care packages, and utility vouchers. Volunteering at the homeless shelter provides me with reminders of how blessed I am. Many of the women come to the shelter as the result of a dispute with family, and many who come with their children are running away from something or someone. I feel like the church has forgotten the Great Commission. The megachurches appear to be in competition over who can build the largest sanctuary and who can pack out the church on Sunday. It is quite alarming that a great number of pastors have forgotten that shelters were established based on a calling from God. Therefore, during devotion every morning, we not only pray for the recipients of our ministry but ask God to help pastors remember that ministering to the needy is part of their calling. Considering my ministry encounters with the downtrodden, the incapacitated and the maligned in our society, I feel a strong compulsion to intercede for them more than I do for my family.

Many veterans who use Mission's services have some form of mental illness. I still find it hard to believe how people can drop their family off there with children to survive in such a destitute setting. When I first started the volunteer work, I tried to catch these people before they drove off, but then I came to understand that God wants us to intervene for many of them. I have also found it sad that many churches today do not serve the homeless. The truth is that the homeless are often demanding, and everyone thinks that their own desires or wants should always come first. I have tried to link every opportunity for my church to help or assist the homeless, but the feedback I get is rarely positive, and I think this is because they often do not understand how the seemingly inconspicuous homeless affect the lives of everyone living within the same communities.

I am convinced that my ministerial calling is completely based on the spirit of service, and when this is examined closely, it appears that God has moved me to be an advocate for those without a voice. According to Isaiah 61:1,

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.²

My compassionate disposition is based on years of work toward change and assistance to the poor and disenfranchised. It is connected to the belief that everyone is welcome at the table and included in the plan for success. My desire for success and compassion grows out of a place of vulnerability as a young boy living in grandparents' house. I was emotionally touched when I read this poem "Who Will Cry for the Little Boy" written by Antwone Fisher.

Who will cry for the little boy?
Lost and all alone. Who will cry for the little boy?
Abandoned without his own? Who will cry for the little boy?
He cried himself to sleep. Who will cry for the little boy?
He never had for keeps. Who will cry for the little boy?
He walked the burning sand. Who will cry for the little boy?
The boy inside the man. Who will cry for the little boy?
Who knows well hurt and pain. Who will cry for the little boy?
He died again and again. Who will cry for the little boy?
A good boy he tried to be. Who will cry for the little boy?
Who cries inside of me.³

² Michael David Coogan, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Carol A. Newsome, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1973).

³ Antwone Q. Fisher, *Who Will Cry for the Little Boy? Poems*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2002).

My growing up in the setting taught me to be independent and gave me the skills to overcome barriers. I knew from an early age that if I wanted something, I had to get it for myself. As the old adages said; “a closed mouth won’t get fed.” Every barrier has helped me to move from one level to a higher level and to move within levels. I believe that I am wonderfully made in the image of God, I cannot allow others to discredit God’s creation. I have often been referred to as tough, but often it has been pain that has pushed me to succeed when I have known that I am not welcome. I have asked myself how I can make room and foster hospitality that meets the needs of others, and what practices will allow our community to see all as equal. How do we create a bridge that can link us all in ministry but not allow us to lose our identity?

When I was, a young teenager beginning to drive, there was a bridge that we had to be crossed to get to town to order grocery at the Bargain Corner. The bridge was narrow, and I was a young driver and I was frightened every time I had to cross it, but I overcame my fears because that was the only way to get there. My bridges now are used to assist me in traveling this journey, and in getting from one point to another. As I enter new heights, I still feel the fear of rejections, but I press forward because to turn around would mean defeat. I believe, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I hope to focus my doctoral project in compassion ministry and provide a basic plan for serving the least of these. It will provide options to churches for forming collaborative partnerships to provide effective ministries in service to the “least of these.” It will focus on the value of other than preaching ministries within the church and illustrate that they are just as vital. For many years, this work has just been working, or a means to pay my bills; however, each new opportunity has been a building block for me

to help others to fulfill their calling for ministry through service. I will utilize some basics I have discovered through my journey in serving others in our community, and this will help to reduce barriers and fear in sharing ministry opportunities

This proposed project is an endeavor to create a model of ministry that “goes the second mile” for service. Social ministry collaborators will be charged with encouraging, educating, and empowering their organizational congregation toward a mandate for outreach and mission opportunities. This project seeks for us to be present in service to others, while being faithful to the calling of the church and our foundational history as Baptists.

Suggested in the article, “If I Can Help Somebody,” we are challenged to move outside of our comfort zone and create a central place for transformation in community and in the lives of those placed in our path.⁴ There are some essential elements in the development of compassion ministries and the work of those dedicated to altruistic service, and the project will follow four basic guidelines. First, it must be church guided, effective compassion ministries that are church guided promote vision, value assessments and community variables. Second, compassion ministries are comprehensive and reflective of the works of Jesus as defined within the presence of the situation. Next, compassion ministries must be community guided, grounded in the personalities and identities of the community served. Just as people have personalities and identities, so do communities, and compassion ministries work alongside communities to discover their own worth. Finally, compassion ministries operate in calculated change. Compassion ministries work as the hands, eyes, and ears of God.

⁴ Sheila Lawrence, *If I Can Help Somebody* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2005).

While the context will change, the central focus of the project should remain the same. I would like to balance my life's work with the ministries that have impacted, influenced or infatuated my being, and share the presence of ministry with others who have the same desire for service. I would like to learn several lessons from the project, the first of which is how ministers can work together to learn, and to share time and place. Second, through the project, I would like to explore the atmosphere that supports ministry services, and thirdly, I hope to discover how to sustain the importance of the church's authority in the community. Finally, as we look at the biblical application, I hope to gain an understanding of how to take the knowledge gained to higher levels to impact change.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

To abandon means to leave alone, to desert. Thus, if God were to abandon humanity, God would leave us alone. God will never abandon any of his children. In this research, it is centered and focused on grief and loss from abandonment. Humanity must fall unconditionally into the hands of God.

In this biblical section, the author briefly describes the connection of the scriptures in Isaiah the forty-ninth chapter, which raises the question “can a woman forget her baby?” Throughout the multiple versions of the Bible, this text refers to the child as a suckling. The forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah will lay the Old Testament framework for the research topic. Additionally, the author evaluated the sixth chapter of Ephesians as the New Testament reflection. The Ephesians scripture affirms the stance but at the end of the day it reminds humanity that God will be with us. Despite the challenges that are presented, including abandonment, God remains faithful to His children.

Abandonment is considered the surrender and relinquishment of property or of rights. Another perspective of abandonment is the voluntary relinquishment of all right, title, claim, and possession, with the intention of not reclaiming it. In the case of children, abandonment is the willful forsaking or forgoing of parental duties. Desertion as a legal concept is similar in this respect, although broader in scope, covering both real and

constructive situations; abandonment is generally seen as involving a specific and tangible forsaking or forgoing.¹

Although most of us adapt to changing circumstances, it is not uncommon to get stuck somewhere in the grief process. If you have been through a sudden and traumatic abandonment, such as losing someone to violence, tragedy or divorce, you may be at increased risk for developing this fear.

The fear of abandonment is one of the most primal fears. Primal fear is the psychology relating to or denoting the needs, fears or behavior that are postulated (especially in Freudian theory) to form the origin of emotional life. Fear is the most primal human emotions. There are different types of fears.² Arachnophobia, the fear of spiders. Ophidiophobia the fear of snakes, Aerophobia the fear of heights, Agoraphobia the fear of crowded places, and Cynophobia the fear of dogs.

Many phobias are triggered by the events of the past. Even if one's object constancy is intact and they are not affected by overarching myths or archetypes, one may have been abandoned at some point in life. By the time one reaches adulthood, most of have been through the death of a loved one. Friends move away. Relationships break up. Transitions occur when high school or college ends, people start getting married and new babies take priority.

Although it is not an official phobia, the fear of abandonment is arguably one of the most common and most damaging "phobias" of all. People with the fear of abandonment may tend to display compulsive behaviors and thought patterns that

¹ Jeffrey N. Younggren and Michael C. Gottlieb, "Termination and Abandonment: History, Risk, and Risk Management," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 39, no. 5 (2008): 498–504.

² Paul Kline, *Psychology and Freudian Theory: Introduction* (London, UK: Methuen Young Books, 1984).

sabotage their relationships, ultimately leading to the dreaded abandonment. This fear can be devastating, but understanding it is the first step toward resolving it. Fear of abandonment is a complex psychological phenomenon. It has been understood from a variety of perspectives. It is even a core symptom of borderline personality disorder. Here are some theories, models, and scenarios that the author personally found useful in understanding and trying to be helpful to people struggling with fears of abandonment.

In object relations theory, an offshoot of Freudian analysis, an object is either a person, a part of a person, or something that somehow symbolizes one or the other. Object constancy is the concept that even when one cannot see someone, that person does not fundamentally change. This is adapting the idea of "object permanence" first studied by the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget.³ Infants learn that mommy or daddy goes to work and then comes home. He or she does not stop loving the child just because they are separated for a few hours.

In this study, the author has attempted to offer a hermeneutical and exegetical response to the text used in this chapter. The terms exegesis and hermeneutics have been used interchangeably and it is a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, particularly a religious text. Traditionally the term was used primarily for work with the Bible; however, in modern usage "biblical exegesis" is used for greater specificity to distinguish it from any other broader critical text explanation. Exegesis includes a wide range of critical disciplines such as textual criticism is the investigation into the history and origins of the text, but exegesis may include the study of the historical and cultural backgrounds for the author, the text, and the original audience. Other analyses include

³ Dorothy G. Singer and Tracey A. Revenson, *A Piaget Primer: How a Child Thinks*, rev. ed. (Madison, CT: Intl. Universities Press, Inc., 1998).

classification of the type of literary genres present in the text and analysis of grammatical and syntactical features in the text itself.⁴

The Old Testament scripture is Isaiah 49:15, which states, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.”⁵ The New Testament scripture is Ephesians 6:4, which states, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, states “Can a woman forget?—The love of Jehovah for His chosen ones is more than that of a father, more tender and unchangeable even than the maternal love which exists often in the most depraved. Even that may perish, but not so His pitying affection.”⁶

Benson Commentary of Isaiah 49:15-16 states, “Can a woman forget her sucking child,” God is often represented as bearing a fatherly affection toward his people, but here the comparison is raised higher, and he speaks of himself as having a tenderness for them, like that which a mother hath toward the fruit of her womb.⁷

The image is common and frequent; yet it is wrought up with so much grace, embellished with so much elegance, and expressed in such pathetic terms, that nothing can exceed it in beauty and force; nothing can convey a stronger idea of the maternal, the more than maternal regard, which God hath for his people.

⁴ Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

⁵ Isaiah 49:15. Biblical citations within the text are found in NSR version, unless otherwise stated.

⁶ Charles John Ellicott, *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982).

⁷ Joseph Benson, *Benson's Commentary: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with Critical, Explanatory and Practical Notes, Etc.*, vol. 2, *The First Book of Kings to Proverbs* (New York, NY: G. Lane and C. B. Tippet, 1846).

Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee—the turn in this clause is more expressive than a volume.⁸

As if he had said, “Earthly parents sometimes are so unnatural and monstrous; but do not entertain such unworthy thoughts of me. Behold, I have gravened thee upon the palms, and so forth. Mine eye and heart are constantly upon thee.” This is certainly an allusion, says Bishop Lowth:

To some practice, common among the Jews at that time, of making marks on their hands or arms by punctures on the skin, rendered indelible by fire or staining, with some sort of sign, or representation of the city or temple, to show their affection and zeal for it. It is well known that the pilgrims at the holy sepulcher get themselves marked in this manner with what are called the ensigns of Jerusalem. In this section), Maundrell tells us how it is performed, and this art is practiced by travelling Jews all over the world at this day.⁹

Or the allusion may be merely to the common practice of men, who use to put signs upon their hands or fingers, of such things as they especially wish to remember.

According to *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary* Isaiah 49:13-17:

Let there be universal joy, for God will have mercy upon the afflicted, because of his compassion; upon his afflicted, because of his covenant. We have no more reason to question his promise and grace, than we should question his providence and justice. Be assured that God has a tender affection for his church and people; he would not have them to be discouraged. Some mothers do neglect their children; but God's compassions to his people, infinitely exceed those of the tenderness of parents toward their children. His setting them as a mark on his hand, or a seal upon his arm, denotes his being ever mindful of them. As far as we have scriptural evidence that we belong to his ransomed flock, we may be sure that he will never forsake us. Let us then give diligence to make our calling and election sure and rejoice in the hope and glory of God.¹⁰

According to *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Isaiah 49:15, “Can a woman forget her sucking child?” The design of this verse is apparent. It is to show that the love which God has for

⁸ Benson, *Benson's Commentary*.

⁹ Benson, *Benson's Commentary*.

¹⁰ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003).

his people is stronger than that which is produced by the most tender ties created by any natural relation. The love of a mother for her infant child is the strongest attachment in nature. The question here implies that it was unusual for a mother to be unmindful of that tie, and to forsake the child that she should nourish and love.

Barnes also noted “that she should not have compassion, that she should not pity and succor it in times of sickness and distress; that she should see it suffer without any attempt to relieve it, and turn away, and see it die unpitied and unalleviated.”¹¹

Barnes finally stated:

Yea, they may forget: They will sooner forget their child than God will forget his afflicted and suffering people. The phrase 'they may forget,' implies that such a thing may occur. In pagan lands, strong as is the instinct which binds a mother to her offspring, it has not been uncommon for a mother to expose her infant child, and to leave it to die. In illustration of this fact, see the notes at Romans 1:31.¹²

According to *Matthew Poole's Commentary* of Isaiah 49:15, “Earthly parents sometimes are so unnatural and monstrous; but do not entertain such unworthy thoughts of me. I will remember thee effectually, to bring thee out of Babylon, and, which is infinitely greater, to send my Son into the world to work out eternal redemption for thee.”¹³

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible on Isaiah 49:15,

Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? This is the Lord's answer to the church's complaint, instancing in the care and affection of a mother to her child, thereby illustrating his love to his people; he instances in a “woman,” the tender sex; in a “child” of hers, an infant, not one grown up, from which her affections might be alienated by disobedience; her suckling child, she had in her arms, and on her knees, and whom her breasts would put her in mind of; and since one that is not an own child may be suckled, it is called “the son of her womb”; and is it possible for such an

¹¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testament: An Explanatory and Practical Commentary* (Richmond, TX: Baker House, 1980).

¹² Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testament*.

¹³ Matthew Poole, *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 3 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985).

one to be forgotten? Yea, they may forget; through inadvertency, want of affection, a cruel disposition, hurry of business, sickness, public calamities, and the like. Lamentations 4:3, such monsters in nature there may be, though rare. Yet will I not forget thee; he cannot forget, because of his nature, on which forgetfulness cannot properly fall; he will not, because of his promise, which never fails; he may seem to his people to have forgotten them, and he may be thought to have done so by others; he forgets their sins, but not their persons; he cannot forget his love, nor his covenant with them, nor his promises made to them; nor does he forget their love to him, nor their works, words, and thoughts; the righteous are had by him in everlasting remembrance.¹⁴

All this suggests that the Lord stands in the relation of a parent to the Lord's people, and they stand in the relation of children to Him; they are born of Him, and are as it were pieces of the Lord, and little images of Him, and dear to Him as the apple of his eye. Humanity is like sucking children, that suck in the milk of His word, and suck at the breasts of his ordinances; and they are used by him in the most tender manner, as infants. They are kissed by him and dandled on the knee. They are led by Him and taught to go; he delights in them when they begin to speak in prayer or praise, though in a lisping and stammering manner. All of humanity's little actions are engaging, their works done by them, though imperfect, and a great deal of childishness in them; when anything ails them, the Lord sympathizes with them. The Lord takes care of them, and provides for them; and it is a concern to the Lord whenever He is obliged to chastise them, and can He therefore forget them?

The *Pulpit Commentary* of Isaiah forty-ninth chapter verse fifteen states:

Can a woman forget? Yea, they may forget. In the siege of Samaria by Benhadad, King of Syria, a mother, we are told (2 Kings 6:28, 29), boiled her son for food. In the last siege of Jerusalem similar horrors are reported (Joseph., 'Bell. Jud.,' 6:03, 4). Mothers have even been known in England who have forced their tender and innocent daughters to commit deadly sin. Yet will I not forget because the love of God surpasses that of either father or mother. "When my father and my mother forsake me," says David, "then the Lord will take me up" (Psalm 27:10). "God is

¹⁴ John Gill, *Gill's Commentary: An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980).

love" (1 John 4:8) in his very essence; and his infinite love is deeper, tenderer, truer, than finite love can ever be. Still, that which is nearest to it upon earth is, doubtless, the love of a mother for her children.¹⁵

In comparison and Isaiah "Provoke not your children to wrath," the word is the same as in Ephesians 4:26. It denotes the exasperation produced by arbitrary and unsympathetic rule. "Nurture and admonition of the Lord," in this phrase there are two elements of education. Nurture is a word signifying generally "the treatment due to a child," but by usage appropriated to practical training, or teaching by discipline.¹⁶ While "admonition" is the "putting children in mind" by word of instruction. It may be noted that in accordance with the characteristic sternness of ancient education, both words have a tinge of severity in them. The "nurture" of this passage is the same as the "chastening" of the famous passage in Hebrews 12:4-11. The "admonition" is used in Titus 3:10 for rebuke, and, inasmuch as it implies warning, is distinguished from teaching in Colossians 3:16. In this, as in other cases, Christianity gradually softened this stern authority of the father—so strikingly exemplified in the old Roman law—by the idea suggested in the addition of the phrase "of the Lord." The children belong not to the parent only, but to Christ, taken into His arms in baptism, and sealed as His little ones. Hence the "reverence," which Juvenal enforced in theory as due to children's natural purity, become understood in Christian practice, and gradually transformed all Christian education to greater gentleness, forbearance, and love.¹⁷

¹⁵ Joseph S. Exell and H. D. M. Spence, eds., *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978).

¹⁶ Exell and Spence, *The Pulpit Commentary*.

¹⁷ Exell and Spence, *The Pulpit Commentary*.

New Testament

The New Testament scripture is found in Ephesians 6:1-4 and it states: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

According to *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary* states that the great duty of children is to obey their parents. That obedience includes inward reverence, as well as outward acts, and in every age, prosperity has attended those distinguished for obedience to parents. The phrase, “The duty of parents,” gives the connotation to not be impatient; use no unreasonable severities. Deal prudently and wisely with children; convince their judgements and work upon their reason. Bring them up well; under proper and compassionate correction; and in the knowledge of the duty God requires. Often is this duty neglected, even among professors of the gospel. Many set their children against religion; but this does not excuse the children’s disobedience, though it may be awfully occasion it. God alone can change the heart, yet he gives his blessing to the good lessons and examples of parents and answers their prayers. Those, whose chief anxiety is that their children should be rich and accomplished, whatever becomes of their souls, must not look for the blessing of God.¹⁸

The *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* sheds light on the phrase “And ye fathers,” a command addressed particularly to “fathers,” because they are at the head of the family, and its government is especially committed to them. The object of the apostle is to show parents that their commands should be such that they can be easily obeyed, or such as are

¹⁸ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

entirely reasonable and proper. If children are required to “obey,” it is reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey. This statement is in accordance with what was stated in Ephesians 5:22-25 of the relation of husband and wife. It was the duty of the wife to obey, but it was the corresponding duty of the husband to manifest such a character that it would be pleasant to yield obedience—so to love her, that his known wish would be law to her. In like manner, it is the duty of children to obey a parent; but it is the duty of a parent to exhibit such a character, and to maintain such a government, that it would be proper for the child to obey; to command nothing that is unreasonable or improper, but to train up his children in the ways of virtue and pure religion.¹⁹

“Provoke not your children to wrath,” that is, by unreasonable commands; by needless severity; by the manifestation of anger. So, govern them, and so punish them - if punishment is necessary—that they shall not lose their confidence in you, but shall love you. The apostle here has hit on the very danger to which parents are most exposed in the government of their children. It is that of souring their temper; of making them feel that the parent is under the influence of anger, and that it is right for them to be so too. This is done:

(1) When the commands of a parent are unreasonable and severe. The spirit of a child then becomes irritated, and he is “discouraged;” Colossians 3:21.

(2) When a parent is evidently “excited” when he punishes a child. The child then feels:

(a) That if his “father” is angry, it is not wrong for him to be angry; and,

¹⁹ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old and New Testament*.

(b) The very fact of anger in a parent kindles anger in his bosom - just as it does when two men are contending.

If he submits in the case, it is only because the parent is the “strongest,” not because he is “right,” and the child cherishes “anger,” while he yields to power. There is no principle of parental government more important than that a father should command his own temper when he inflicts punishment. He should punish a child not because he is “angry,” but because it is “right;” not because it has become a matter of “personal contest,” but because God requires that he should do it, and the welfare of the child demands it. The moment when a child seem that a parent punishes him under the influence of anger, that moment the child will be likely to be angry too - and his anger will be as proper as that of the parent. Yet, how often is punishment inflicted in this manner! How often does the child feel that the parent punished him simply because he was the “strongest,” not because it was “right;” and how often is the mind of a child left with a strong conviction that wrong has been done him by the punishment which he has received, rather than with repentance for the wrong that he has himself done. The phrase “Bring them up,” places them under such discipline and instruction that they shall become acquainted with the Lord. In the nurture meaning “training of a child;” hence education, instruction, discipline. Here, it means that they are to train up their children in such a manner as the Lord approves; that is, they are to educate them for virtue and religion.

“And admonition,” the word used here means literally, “a putting in mind,” then warning, admonition, and instruction. The sense here is, that they were to put them in mind of the Lord—of his existence, perfections, law, and claims on their hearts and lives. This command is positive and is in accordance with all the requirements of the Bible on

the subject. No one can doubt that the Bible enjoins the parents of the duty of endeavoring to train up their children in the ways of religion, and of making it the grand purpose of this life to prepare them for heaven. It has been often objected that children should be left on religious subjects to form their own opinions when they are able to judge for themselves. Infidels and irreligious people always oppose or neglect the duty enjoined; and the plea commonly is, that to teach religion to children is to make them prejudiced; to destroy their independence of mind; and to prevent their judging as impartially on so important a subject as they ought to.²⁰ In reply to this, and in defense of the requirements of the Bible on the subject, we may remark:

(1) That to suffer a child to grow up without any instruction in religion, is about the same as to suffer a garden to lie without any culture. Such a garden would soon be overrun with weeds, and briars, and thorns - but not sooner, or more certainly, than the mind of a child would.

(2) People do instruct their children in a great many things, and why should they not in religion? They teach them how to behave in company; the art of farming; the way to make or use tools; how to make money; how to avoid the arts of the cunning seducer. But why should it not be said that all this tends to destroy their independence, and to make them prejudiced? Why not leave their minds open and free, and suffer them to form their own judgments about farming and the mechanic arts when their minds are matured?

(3) People do inculcate their own sentiments in religion. An infidel is not usually "very" anxious to conceal his views from his children. People teach by example; by incidental remarks; by the "neglect" of that which they regard as of no value. A man who does not pray, is teaching his children not to pray; he who neglects the public worship of God, is teaching his children to neglect it; he who does not read the Bible, is teaching his children not to read it. Such is the constitution of things, that it is impossible for a parent not to inculcate his own religious views on his children. Since this is so, all that the Bible requires is, that his instructions should be right.

(4) To inculcate the truths of religion is not to make the mind narrow, prejudiced, and indisposed to perceive the truth. Religion makes the mind candid,

²⁰ Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testament*.

conscientious, open to conviction, ready to follow the truth. Superstition, bigotry, infidelity, and “all” error and falsehood, make the mind narrow and prejudiced.²¹

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary highlights the term “Fathers,” including mothers and the fathers are specified as being the fountains of domestic authority. Fathers are more prone to passion in relation to their children than mothers, whose fault is rather over-indulgence.

“Provoke not” means do not irritate, by vexatious commands, unreasonable blame, and uncertain temper. Colossians 3:21, further supports the meaning by stating “lest they be discouraged.” The word “nurture” in the Greek means “discipline,” namely, training by chastening in act where needed (Job 5:17; Heb. 12:7).²²

According to *Matthew Poole’s Commentary* he focuses on the term, “Provoke not your children to wrath;” meaning unreasonable severity, moroseness, or unrighteous commands, but the child should be brought up being nurtured, or corrected, as the word signifies. Admonition denotes the end of the former; instruction in their duty must be, as well as correction to drive them to it. Therefore, it is either that admonition is commanded by him, or whereby they are brought to be acquainted with him.²³

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible discusses Ephesians 6:4 by stating:

And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, Neither by words; by unjust and, unreasonable commands; by contumelious and reproachful language; by frequent and public chidings, and by indiscreet and passionate expressions: nor by deeds; preferring one to another; by denying them the necessities of life; by not allowing them proper recreation; by severe and cruel blows, and inhuman usage; by not giving them suitable education; by an improper disposal of them in marriage; and by profusely spending their estates, and leaving nothing to them:

²¹ Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old and New Testament*.

²² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977).

²³ Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

not but that parents may, and ought to correct and rebuke their children; nor are they accountable to them for their conduct; yet they should take care not to provoke them to wrath, because this alienates their minds from them, and renders their instructions and corrections useless, and puts them upon sinful practices; wrath lets in Satan, and leads to sin against God; and indeed it is difficult in the best of men to be angry and not sin; see Colossians 3:21. Fathers are particularly mentioned, as being the heads of families, and are apt to be too severe, as mothers too indulgent.²⁴

Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord instructs them in the knowledge of divine things, setting good examples, taking care of them to prevent them falling into bad company, praying with them, and, bringing them into the house of God, under the means of grace, to attend public worship. By doing all of these things brings the child under a divine blessing, which may be very useful to them. The example of Abraham is worthy of imitation, Genesis 18:19, and the advice of the wise man deserves attention, Proverbs 22:6.²⁵

The Geneva Study Bible on Ephesian 6:4 states:

{6} And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and {c} admonition of the Lord. (6) It is the duty of fathers to use their fatherly authority moderately and to God's glory. (c) Such information and precepts which are taken out of God's book and are holy and acceptable to him. The latest occurred under the Han dynasty (205 BC-220 AD), and certainly before the Christian era.²⁶

Conclusion

In conclusion, many have experienced trauma, pain, fear, and rejection; these traumas injure your soul. Many Christians struggle and do not experience the peace, joy,

²⁴ Gill, *Gill's Commentary: An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*.

²⁵ Gill, *Gill's Commentary: An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*.

²⁶ Hendrickson Bibles, *The Geneva Bible: The Bible of the Protestant Reformation* (Madison, WI: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007).

and thankfulness that God desires for them, and they are unaware of the damage that has occurred in their soul. When one receives salvation, their soul arrives before the throne in varying degrees of brokenness. Some have been beaten down and shattered, while others have only acquired nicks and bruises. Trauma, abuse and abandonment are closely linked because they all result in a psychological or emotional disturbance. One's experiences produce messages, and the messages develop into faulty core beliefs and mental strongholds that direct your expectations, emotions, speech patterns, life, and relationship skills. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

When you experience trauma, abuse, and abandonment it affects your expectations and how you see yourself, and others. These experiences produce messages, and you must choose to "not be conformed to this world." If you agree with the messages from your experiences, adopt faulty thinking and behavioral patterns in response to them, one has been conformed to this world.

If an individual has been victimized it does not mean they must think, live, or respond like a victim. The individual is an overcomer; every form of damage can be processed and overcome when one does not allow it to taint their tomorrow with fear, negative expectations, pain, or rejection.

Trauma is not necessarily abuse, but all abuse is trauma. Trauma is a wound formed by sudden physical injury, or an emotional shock that jars the mind and emotions and can produce lasting damage to the psychological development of an individual. Everyone has experienced trauma through life occurrences. Trauma can be identified in

several areas: physical, accidental injuries, illnesses, psychological, and emotional traumas.²⁷

Abuse is the improper, misuse of an individual. It is a misuse of authority. When one is handled by another person or group wrongly, they have been mistreated and experienced harm, they have endured abuse. Abuse can be verbal, emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, or spiritual. Most people do not know how to identify the subtle forms of abuse that are epidemic in our society. Often when individuals feel like the rug has been pulled out from under them, they may feel confused and disoriented. The individual can receive double messages, when you feel disrespected, controlled and manipulated, unheard, invalidated, and your needs are not met, the person has experienced the subtle forms of abuse.

All abuse systems will use anywhere from blatant, to subtle forms of manipulation and control. Abuse ranges from less severe to extreme. All abuse damages one's thinking, expectations, self-image, life, and relationship skills. The damage done to the soul is directly proportionate to their experiences. No abuse is to be swept under the rug, because any and every destructive event harms your soul.²⁸

Abandonment is another form of abuse that is not from an action, but from a lack of action. Most people do not realize that this is abuse, but neglect is a form of abuse. If one's needs were left unmet from childhood, or anytime in an adult relationship the person may emerge with pain in your soul. When someone is emotionally unavailable, does not communicate, withholds information, support, comfort, or affection, it is

²⁷ Irmo Marini and Mark A. Stebnicki, eds., *The Psychological and Social Impact of Illness and Disability*, 7th ed. (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2017).

²⁸ Shannon Thomas, *Healing from Hidden Abuse: A Journey Through the Stages of Recovery from Psychological Abuse* (Tempe, AZ: MAST Publishing House, 2016).

abandonment, an abuse from a lack of action.²⁹ As the author has referenced many passages in the Bible, reader can now look historically to see that abandonment is not a new plight. The forefathers and mothers of the country were caretaker and assisted in bridging the gap.

²⁹ Michelle Skeen and Wendy T. Beharry, *Love Me, Don't Leave Me: Overcoming Fear of Abandonment and Building Lasting, Loving Relationships* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2014).

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Child abandonment is nothing new. The act of physical child abandonment has been a common occurrence in many cultures for years. It has remained an area that has been consistently understudied. This study will deal with grief and loss. A little history lesson will go a long way in understanding today's situation and the church's place in it.

In studying the topic of child abandonment, most of the research correlates child abandonment with child abuse including sexual, verbal and physical. Child abandonment is the practice of relinquishing interests and claims over one's offspring in an extralegal way with the intent of never again resuming or reasserting them. Causes include many social and cultural factors as well as mental illness. Poverty is often a root cause of child abandonment. People in cultures with poor social welfare systems who are not financially capable of taking care of a child are more likely to abandon them. Political conditions, such as difficulty in adoption proceedings, may also contribute to child abandonment, as can the lack of institutions, such as orphanages, to take in children whom their parents cannot support.

An abandoned child is called a foundling (as opposed to a runaway or an orphan). Baby dumping refers to parents abandoning or discarding a child younger than twelve

months in a public or private place with the intent of disposing of them. It is also known as rehoming in cases of failed adoptions.¹

Another common reason for baby dumping is teenage pregnancies.² Pregnant teenagers experience problems during and after childbirth due to social and psychological distress. Regardless of age, parents may abandon a child because they are unprepared to raise them. Other reasons include un-preferred gender, appearance, or other characteristics of the child as well as mental or physical handicaps of the child. Education, family planning, government support, and post-natal services and support for motherhood are available tools for reducing this problem.

Historically, many cultures practiced abandonment of infants, called "infant exposure." Although such children would survive if taken up by others, exposure is often considered a form of infanticide—as described by Tertullian in his *Apology*: “it is certainly the crueler way to kill... by exposure to cold and hunger and dogs.”³

In European countries child abandonment worsens. Babies are abandoned at an increasing rate so much so that charitable institutions have reintroduced a very old device, “the baby hatch.” Desperate mothers and fathers place their infants in the hatch at an agency, orphanage or church, an electric sensor goes off, and caregivers come to the rescue. Something much like this was used in the Middle Ages, and for a significant time

¹ Gregory L. Jantz and Ann McMurray, *Healing the Scars of Childhood Abuse: Moving beyond the Past into a Healthy Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2017).

² Rachel G. Fuchs, “Legislation, Poverty, and Child-Abandonment in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 1 (1987): 55–80.

³ Michael H. Burnstein, “Child Abandonment: Historical, Sociological and Psychological Perspectives,” *Child Psychiatry and Human Development* 11, no. 4 (1981): 213–221.

after— a secret door at a monastery, convent, hospital or church, where children whose parents could not care for them would be left (anonymously) and be cared for.⁴

In ancient pagan Rome, babies were abandoned out of desperation to be sure, but many, many more were abandoned because the Romans fully and happily approved of infanticide. If a baby was deformed or unwanted, he or she would be abandoned with no moral regrets whatsoever. Roman law even demanded that deformed infants must be killed, and exposure was the means to do it. Abandonment through exposure was very common and had nothing to do with hard economic times. The children who didn't die were picked up by slavers and pimps.⁵

When Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 312 the infanticide began to change. Constantine introduced harsh penalties for child exposure, but also unprecedented remedies for the innocent children; the Christian imperium would “bestow freely the necessary support on all persons whom they observe to be placed in dire need.”⁶

In the very Christian sixth-century Justinian Code, the Christian imperium declared: “Those who expose children, possibly hoping they would die, and those who use the potions of the abortionist are subject to the full penalty of the law—both civil and ecclesiastical—for murder. When exposure occurs, the finder of the child is to see to it

⁴ Melissa Snell, “Surviving Infancy in the Middle Ages,” ThoughtCo, accessed May 23, 2018, <https://www.thoughtco.com/medieval-child-surviving-infancy-1789124>.

⁵ Rebecca L. Gowland and Andrew T. Chamberlain, “A Bayesian Approach to Ageing Perinatal Skeletal Material from Archaeological Sites: Implications for the Evidence for Infanticide in Roman-Britain,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 29, no. 6 (June 1, 2002): 677–685.

⁶ Arnaldo Dante Momigliano, “Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century AD,” in *Christian and Judaic Invention of History* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 103–121.

that he is baptized and that he is treated with Christian care and compassion. They may be then adopted ... even as we have been adopted into the Kingdom of grace.”⁷

Christianity changed everything, especially how to deal with desperate people and their babies. In evangelizing Europe, the church changed its culture from a pagan affirmation of abandonment by exposure to Christian compassion, where the baby was abandoned into the arms of the church.

Christianity is the reason why both Christian and non-Christian charitable organizations in Europe are providing baby hatches. If it was not for Christianity, Europe would still be practicing pagan infanticide. However, if Europe sinks more deeply into secularism, its current affirmation of abortion will bring it to embrace ever more cheerfully the ancient “right” of Roman pagans to infanticide. There would not need to be any more baby hatches, or the hatches will be opened on the other side by those running something even more horrible than abortion businesses.⁸

The collapse of the European economy provides an unprecedented opportunity for the church to display the greatest charity, the greatest self-sacrifice, the greatest love for those falling through the secular safety net—not just the babies, but the parents as well.

Pagan Europe embraced Christianity, in large part, because of the extraordinary love shown by Christians to the poor, the sick, the downtrodden, the persecuted—all those who found themselves desperate and in need of a miracle. The pagans could not

⁷ Benjamin Wiker, “The Collapse of Europe, Child Abandonment and the Hope of the Church,” *National Catholic Register*, last modified August 14, 2012, accessed May 23, 2018, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/the-collapse-of-europe-child-abandonment-and-the-hope-of-the-church>.

⁸ Jeffrey L. Morrow, “Averroism, Nominalism, and Mechanization: Hahn and Wiker’s Unmasking of Historical Criticism’s Political Agenda by Laying Bare Its Philosophical Roots,” *Nova et vetera* 14, no. 4 (2016): 1293–1340.

match it, as the pagan emperor-revert Julian the Apostate grudgingly conceded. Although he wanted to wipe Christianity off the face of the earth, he was forced to admit, “Nothing has contributed to the progress of the superstition of the Christians as their charity to strangers. ... The impious Galileans provide not only for their own poor, but for ours as well.”⁹

Julian’s attempt to turn the Roman Empire failed, and, consequently, Europe was Christianized. Christians won by the grace of God, but that was in no small part the grace of God, as witnessed in their extraordinary witness of charity: taking care of the desperate and abandoned, those who had fallen into, or never climbed up from, the very bottom of society.

The church has that same opportunity today. Europe, once strong, once Christian, is now both feeble and secularized. Its weakness and collapse are, in fact, due in great part to its secularization. Europeans abandoned their Christian heritage and embraced the secular state as their church, as a substitute for the Kingdom of God, as the provider of all things, the wiper of all tears, the solver of all problems and the hope for a new Eden on earth. The European welfare states are collapsing, in part, under the weight of their trying to take the place of God.

Similarly, there have been instances of homicidal neglect by confinement of infants or children such as in the affair of the Osaka child abandonment case or the affair of two abandoned children in Calgary, Alberta, Canada by their mother Rie Fujii.

Medieval laws in Europe governing child abandonment, as for example the Visigothic

⁹ David Gates, “History of the Orphanage,” *Newsweek*, last modified December 11, 1994, accessed May 23, 2018, <http://www.newsweek.com/history-orphanage-185444>.

Code, often prescribed that the person who had taken up the child was entitled to the child's service as a slave.¹⁰

Conscripting or enslaving children into armies and labor pools often occurred because of war or pestilence when many children were left parentless. Abandoned children then became the ward of the state, military organization, or religious group. When this practice happened in masse, it had the advantage of ensuring the strength and continuity of cultural and religious practices in medieval society.¹¹

The largest migration of abandoned children in history took place in the United States between 1854 and 1929. Over two hundred thousand orphans were forced onto railroad cars and shipped west, where any family desiring their services as laborers, maids, and servants used and abused them. Orphan trains were highly popular as a source of free labor. The sheer size of the displacement and degree of exploitation that occurred gave rise to new agencies and a series of laws that promoted adoption rather than indenture. Eventually, adoption became a quintessential American institution, embodying faith in social engineering and mobility. By 1945, adoption was formulated as a legal act with consideration of the child's best interests. The origin of the move toward secrecy and the sealing of all adoption and birth records began when Charles Loring Brace introduced the concept to prevent children from the orphan trains from returning to or being reclaimed by their parents. Brace feared the impact of the parents' poverty and

¹⁰ Angela Browne Miller, *Violence and Abuse in Society: Understanding a Global Crisis* (New York, NY: ABC-CLIO, 2012).

¹¹ William D. Phillips Jr., *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

their Catholic religion on the youth. Reformers during the Progressive Era later carried on this tradition of secrecy when drafting American laws.¹²

A modern baby box or baby hatch is believed to have existed in the Czech Republic where a baby can be anonymously abandoned while ensuring that the child will be cared for. Despite the barbaric nature of this trend, it still offered a semblance of hope for parents who abandoned their babies because they had a chance to be care for, but many ended up in very abhorrent circumstances.

Historical Patterns of Child Abandonment

Michael H. Burnstein writes in “Child Abandonment: Historical, Sociological and Psychological Perspectives” that “Motivations differ, but the act has been present since the time of earliest man. For example, Moses was left by his mother in a conscious effort to save his life. In this example, there was abandonment, but for the safety of the child.”¹³ Most acts of physical abandonments are means to alleviate or remove oneself from responsibility. He continues by noting that “not until many centuries later is the first psychological treatment (1801) of an abandoned child recorded by the noted French otologist, Jean-Marie Itard. Itard took great effort to treat and raise a found child who previously raised himself among animals in the forest near Aveyron, France.”¹⁴

Burnstein suggests, “child abandonment is historically first mentioned in relation to providing basic care for parentless children which resulted in the first residential home

¹² Gates, “History of the Orphanage,” accessed May 23, 2018, <http://www.newsweek.com/history-orphanage-185444>.

¹³ Burnstein, “Child Abandonment,” 213–221.

¹⁴ Burnstein, “Child Abandonment,” 213–221.

for children in the fourth century. The growth of these centers helped to shape the response to abandonment of children.”¹⁵ In the fifth century, a similar center was organized by the Christian Church in Arles, France, to care for and to protect what were then referred to as “exposed infants.” This leads to the beginning of the Poor Law of 1601 in England which stipulated minimal care for the poor, including children, society had taken an interest in children. Gradually, the church of Louis XIV influenced European society to form several hospitals for the increasing numbers of abandoned and found infants.¹⁶

The historical issues of child abandonment were first addressed in the United States with the founding of orphanages by nuns in 1729. Ursuline nuns founded the first orphan asylum in North America in 1729, after Indians massacred adult settlers at Natchez, Mississippi. Most eighteenth century orphans went to country neighbors or city almshouses.¹⁷ Orphanages hardly existed until urbanization and immigration intensified in the 1830s and twenty-three private orphan asylums opened. By 1850, New York state alone had twenty-seven orphanages, both public and private—and yet New York City was still overrun with some 10,000 “street Arabs,” many of them the children of Irish immigrants.

¹⁵ Burnstein, “Child Abandonment,” 213–221.

¹⁶ Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England, 1350–1600* (Boston, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014).

African-American Orphanages

The Colored Orphan Asylum was an institution in New York City open from 1836-1946 that housed on average four hundred children annually and was mostly managed by women.¹⁸

The Colored Orphan Asylum was founded in 1836 by three Quakers, Anna and Hanna Shotwell and Marry Murray, and it was one of the first of its kind in the United States to take in black children whose parents had died or were not able to take care of them. William Seraile notes, “eventually financial support would come from some of New York's finest families, including the Jays, Murrays, Roosevelts, Macys, and Astors.”¹⁹ Even with the funding issues surrounding the leadership and the motives Seraile states,

While the white female managers and their male advisers were dedicated to uplifting these black children, the evangelical, mainly Quaker founding managers also exhibited the extreme paternalistic views endemic at the time, accepting the advice or support of the African American community only grudgingly. It was frank criticism in 1913 from W.E.B. Du Bois that highlighted the conflict between the orphanage and the community it served, and it was not until 1939 that it hired the first black female trustee.²⁰

The orphanage is believed to have served more than 15,000 children.²¹

¹⁸ Catherine Reef, *Alone in the World: Orphans and Orphanages in America* (Kennesaw, GA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005).

¹⁹ William Seraile, *Angels of Mercy: White Women and the History of New York's Colored Orphan Asylum* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1725).

²⁰ W. E. B. Du Bois and David Levering Lewis, *Black Reconstruction in America (The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois): An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²¹ Du Bois and Lewis, *Black Reconstruction in America*.

Church and Community Response

The progression and the work of assisting children has defined link to the church. According to the Sisters of Charity, over the past 147 years, the Sisters' ministry has continued evolving from a respite home for abandoned children, to a comprehensive spectrum of community support services designed to empower the vulnerable children and families of New York. While social situations and our approach to our mission have evolved, we continue to share our founders' belief that no one should ever be abandoned, and that all children deserve the right to grow up in loving and stable environments.²²

Today, abandonment of a child is a serious crime in many jurisdictions because it can be considered *malum in se* (wrong in itself) due to the direct harm to the child, and because of welfare concerns (in that the child often becomes a ward of the state and in turn, a burden upon the public fisc). For example, in the U.S., the state of Georgia, it is a misdemeanor to willfully and voluntarily abandon a child, and a felony to abandon one's child and leave the state.²³

Many jurisdictions have exceptions to abandonment laws in the form of haven laws, which apply to babies left in designated places such as hospitals. In the United Kingdom, abandoning a child under the age of two years is a criminal offence. In 2004, forty-nine babies were abandoned nationwide with slightly more boys than girls being abandoned.²⁴

²² Sandra L. Barnes, "The Black Church Revisited: Toward a New Millennium DuBoisian Mode of Inquiry," *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 4 (December 1, 2014): 607–621.

²³ Marolyn Wells and Rebecca Jones, "Relationship Among Childhood Parentification, Splitting, and Dissociation: Preliminary Findings," *The American Journal of Family Therapy* 26, no. 4 (January 1, 1998): 331–339.

²⁴ L. Sherr, J. Mueller, and Z. Fox, "Abandoned Babies in the UK – A Review Utilizing Media Reports," *Child: Care, Health and Development* 35, no. 3 (May 1, 2009): 419–430.

Abandonment is rife in Malaysia, where between 2005 and 2011, 517 babies were dumped. Of those 517 children, 287 were found dead. In 2012, there were thirty-one cases, including at least one instance of a child being tossed from a window of a high-rise apartment.²⁵

Persons in cultures with poor social welfare systems who are not financially capable of taking care of a child are more likely to abandon them. Several American states are moving towards passing legislation to prevent rehoming of children post adoption. However, national legislation may be needed to protect children from being rehomed in all states.²⁶

When the first allegations in the U.S. emerged in 1985, the Conference brushed off advice to take proactive steps to confront them. “They made it clear that they did not think this was a problem,” Fr. Tom Doyle, a canon lawyer, told FRONTLINE. Doyle worked with another priest, Fr. Michael Peterson, and attorney Ray Mouton, to draw up guidelines for handling the crisis. Their manual recommended reporting allegations to civil authorities and cooperating fully with police.”²⁷

The men mailed a copy to every bishop in the country at their own expense. Ultimately the Conference chose not to implement the guidelines. Nearly two decades later in 2002, after *The Boston Globe* broke a series of stories detailing a broader crisis, the public backlash forced the church to confront the problem. The Conference founded a

²⁵ Ihmi Hussain, S. Al, M. Sinniah, and D. Kurup, “Five-Year Surveillance of Acute Flaccid Paralysis in Malaysia,” *Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health* 40, no. 3 (March 1, 2004): 127–130.

²⁶ Paul Joseph Fronczak and Alex Tresniowski, *The Foundling: The True Story of a Kidnapping, a Family Secret, and My Search for the Real Me* (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2017).

²⁷ Erin N. Schoenfelder, N. Sandler, and S. Wolchik, “Quality of Social Relationships and the Development of Depression in Parentally-Bereaved Youth,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 40, no. 1 (January 2011): 85–96.

committee dedicated to protecting children and established a charter with guidelines to prevent abuse and deal with allegations.

Most of the guidelines were like what Doyle, Mouton and Peterson had proposed in their 1985 manual, including reporting all allegations to the police and cooperating with investigations. Today, allegations are also supposed to be forwarded to a review board appointed by the bishop. The board reviews the evidence and makes recommendations on whether or how to discipline the offender.²⁸

“Perhaps the most important advancement for the church in the last decade is a realization of its leaders that cooperation with legal authorities is in the best interest of the church,” Notzon, the review board chair, said during his 2012 presentation.²⁹

Notzon said that most dioceses now follow that procedure but acknowledged that not all do. “Those few cases that are not reported [to the police] quickly become news,” he said. “The harm that can be done to children—and at a distant second, the negative publicity that results—should serve as reminder to all of how important it is to follow canon law. The Conference did not respond to an email and phone call seeking a comment on its handling of the crisis.”³⁰

When Doyle and his colleagues wrote their manual in 1985, they warned that abuse allegations could cost the Catholic Church a great deal of money if they did not act.

²⁸ Jeffrey L. Morrow, “Averroism, Nominalism, and Mechanization: Hahn and Wiker’s Unmasking of Historical Criticism’s Political Agenda by Laying Bare Its Philosophical Roots,” *Nova et vetera* 14, no. 4 (2016): 1293–1340.

²⁹ Sarah Childless, “What’s the State of the Church’s Child Abuse Crisis?” *Frontline*, accessed May 22, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/whats-the-state-of-the-churchs-child-abuse-crisis/>.

³⁰ Childless, “What’s the State of the Church’s Child Abuse Crisis?” accessed May 22, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/whats-the-state-of-the-churchs-child-abuse-crisis/>.

Jesus Christ is the key to the Christian school. School is an institution, that is, a public, social complex created to safeguard the communication of the culture. That is why the school is a fruitful, creative meeting-place between generations in learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. The school that has a Christian inspired plan is the one whose plan is understood in the person of Jesus Christ, God, and humans. In a Christian inspired plan, Jesus Christ is the key-person, the key that enables a different meaning to be given to the things learned, the reorientation of action and opening onto a horizon of transcendent hope.³¹ In a school with a Christian inspired plan, all the pieces of learning are integrated into Christian wisdom, and this is the ability to discern from the point of view of the poor.

In it, faith and culture, faith and life are united in a way analogous to the union of the Son of God with humanity in the mystery of the Incarnation that is without one becoming the other, without confusion - without one being absorbed in the other - without separation - without their being able to be thought of separately without division - without conflict between them... Between culture and faith, life and faith, there is a relationship of discontinuity and interruption, but, at the same time of consummation and plenitude.³²

In a school with a Christian inspired plan, for pastoral care there is a unique agenda: the faith-culture-life synthesis, developed through multiple pastoral, pedagogical processes. Thinking of the school in this way is understanding it as a spiritual reality. It is a place where men and women, children, adolescents and adults can have an authentic experience of the Spirit. It is, at the same time, a cognitive, ethical and religious experience. Speaking of education in terms of initiation, because the school sees itself as an ecclesial community; the community of communities, it is the place where the Gospel is incarnated

³¹ Todd C. Ream and Perry L. Glanzer, *The Idea of a Christian College: A Reexamination for Today's University* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).

³² James C. Carper and Jack Layman, "Black-Flight Academies: The New Christian Day Schools," *The Educational Forum* 61, no. 2 (June 30, 1997): 114–121.

into the culture which dialogues with the entire culture even though it be popular, childish, adolescent and juvenile. Not thinking of it as outside the system, but in collaboration with other institutions and with men and women who are pursuing the same kind of research although with other inspirations.³³

In conclusion, one must acknowledge the obvious. No one ever decided that they wanted to be abandoned. Abandonment arises when people that we think will love, understand, and receive us are absent. Whatever the reason of the abandonment, the encounter is painful. Abandonment is more than an issue of history. It is a personal heartbreak that leaves its victims in emotional confusion, brings about social separation, homelessness, and can result in lasting illness. Abandonment affects communities, and churches, and pastors, scholars and the faithful of God hold a great responsibility to deal with it. Some need support working through their pain of being abandoned in the past, while others may seek assistance for a current crisis.³⁴ Many need the reassurance of the church that God can and will bring about healing. Yet, others who have no connection to God or any church fosters a mandate for the church to seek out the lost, help to create places of safety and extend opportunities for healing. Grief is a normal response to a deeply felt loss and it causes us to look at our theology of where is God.

³³ Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra, *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning*, ed. David I. Smith and James K. Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

³⁴ David L. Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The claim of theology to circumstances of grief and bereavement needs great care and judgement. When an individual loses someone, they love or experience a loss of something that was held very dear by abandonment or death. As a result, the person tends to fall into a state of grief. Grief can be felt as mental anguish, sorrow, or profound sadness. Grief is a normal response to a deeply felt loss. Grief is singular, often lonely experience for each person. No two people or children grieve alike.

Many children who suffer the loss of a parent or someone they love often are left to grieve in silence. It seems both an obvious and unassailable fact that children will suffer, sometimes acutely, from the loss of important figures in their lives; yet it was not long ago that such profound sorrow was not widely acknowledged. Pastoral and spiritual care theology, to be certain, holds the controls to convey hope, healing and comfort to those in need of our care. It is also increasingly clear that not only do children grieve, but they also grieve in diverse ways or express their grief differently than do adults. This chapter is designed to evaluate the theological perspective on abuse. The perspective will be examined through the lens of pastoral care theology and theology in ministry. It was not until Freud—not Sigmund, but his daughter Anna—shed light on childhood grief that the subject captured the attention and validation of researchers.

“Kids often grieve in spurts because they can't seem to tolerate grief for long periods of time,” says Susan Thomas, LCSW-R, FT, program director for the Center for H.O.P.E. at Cohen’s Children’s Medical Center of New York.¹ Adults, she explains, “have one foot in grief and one foot on the outside, but kids jump in and out of grief.”² Children may give the appearance of coping well, when suddenly a seemingly innocuous event unrelated to the loss triggers a disproportional response. For example, says Thomas, “A child may scrape her knee and say, ‘I wish Daddy were here. If he were here this wouldn’t have happened.’ Kids are masters at being able to distract themselves and focus on other things, but when something happens, all of the emotion they’ve been pushing away comes back.”³ This coping mechanism, Thomas says, allows them to “handle the intensity of the experience.”⁴ In equal circumstances, pastoral and spiritual care theology can do great damage, if it is not practical or reflective. The purpose of pastoral and spiritual care theology to support this project is to provide a method for reflecting, theologically, on the lack of pastoral care and counseling, mental health counseling, and spiritual care within African-American churches. The project seeks to

¹ Kate Jackson, “How Children Grieve: Persistent Myths May Stand in the Way of Appropriate Care and Support for Children,” accessed May 23, 2018, <http://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/030415p20.shtml>.

² Susan Thomas, “Center for HOPE | Northwell Health,” accessed May 23, 2018, <https://childrenshospital.northwell.edu/your-visit/center-for-hope>.

³ Thomas, “Center for HOPE | Northwell Health,” accessed May 23, 2018, <https://childrenshospital.northwell.edu/your-visit/center-for-hope>.

⁴ Thomas, “Center for HOPE | Northwell Health,” accessed May 23, 2018, <https://childrenshospital.northwell.edu/your-visit/center-for-hope>.

assist pastors with the will to learn from the field of pastoral and spiritual care theology how to minister to the least of these in the congregation.⁵

Many churches tend to facilitate the concerns of the congregation in terms that are defined as (spiritual) that they think everyone understands. The concern with this thinking is that when it comes to spirituality, especially in the African-American church there is a wide discrepancy of understanding among church leaders as to what that word means and involves. It beclouds the issue of who can provide care. Therefore, it is imperative that pastors define these terms so that there is an understanding that there really is a variance, and the differences are significant.⁶

First, spiritual care comes under the large cloud of the basic spiritual support that anyone can provide to help someone gains knowledge with his or her spiritual journey to experience wholeness and wellness. Since the church promotes a basic understanding of what is involved with spiritual care even with a general understanding of the significant differences in the claim: that others can provide spiritual care (such as: social workers, nurses, church members, clergy and so forth). There is little doubt that anyone can provide this basic spiritual support. It does not require a specialist and the church is overflowing with people offering help. The church pastor is often chosen as the basic spiritual support, trained or not to assist their members. Getting beyond misperceptions to help children cope with loss, both family caregivers and health professionals must recognize the misperceptions that stand in the way of providing children the same understanding and support that is offered to adults in mourning.⁷

Second, pastoral care is an interlocking cord from basic spiritual care. The word “pastoral” implies the giving of spiritual guidance by a clergy member. This level of pastoral care is provided by those who have some theological education and pastoral experience and is often the faith leader or pastor of a local congregation. Such pastoral

⁵ Nancy J. Ramsay, *Pastoral Theology and Care: Critical Trajectories in Theory and Practice*, 1st ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018).

⁶ Cain Hope Felder, *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1705).

⁷ Eleanor Haley, “Childhood Grief: The Influence of Age on Understanding,” What’s Your Grief, last modified January 14, 2013, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://whatsyourgrief.com/childhood-grief/>.

care often forms a part of pastor's duties seeking wholeness, healing and health. Clergy as "pastoral" caregivers are general practitioners in being actively involved in the lives of their members. Most certainly know a lot about caring for the spiritual needs of the hurting, but their pastoral care ministry is usually not a main part of their focused experience and expertise. While, most pastor would be considered in their churches, most specialist is qualified by advanced training (it goes beyond basic theological education) plus certification. A specialist has superior knowledge, strengths and skills needed for the specialty task of spiritual support. Despite recent research, misperceptions about the very existence of childhood grief persist. That attitude is a disservice to children since it deprives them of the ability to grieve.⁸

So, for some spiritual care is general and pastoral care is more specific but within the African-American church they cannot be separated. This is the church's reasonable understanding because otherwise what the church defines as what the pastor provides as being unique from what anyone else can provide? This terminology comes from a rich tradition that reflects the caring and healing role of our Good Shepherd, Jesus. It emerges from religious traditions, which are historically Christian.⁹

Pastoral Care in Theology

Eduard Thurneysen writes in the *Theology of Pastoral Care* that "pastoral care is recognized as a specific function within the church, nevertheless, its basis and

⁸ Margaret Stroebe, Jan Van Den Bout, and Henk Schut, "Myths and Misconceptions about Bereavement: The Opening of a Debate," *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 29, no. 3 (November 1, 1994): 187–203.

⁹ Andrew D. Lester, "Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me!: Anger at God," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 16, no. 2 (September 1, 2006): 53–70.

continuance, its validity and practical formulation, seem rather uncertain.”¹⁰ Pastoral Theology has been placed in the discipline of practical theology. Andrew Root notes in *Christopraxis: A Practical Theology of the Cross*, “If there is a father of practical theology, it is Friedrich Scheiermacher (1768-1834), the great nineteenth century theologian. He not only reimagined theology in a modern world but placed practical theology as the crown of the theological three.”¹¹ The discussion of practical theology is conducted in relation to other forms of theology such as womanist, feminism, liberation, and pastoral theology. The emphasis in practical theology is modified in our cultural context, still the biblical principles are constant. This discussion raises questions that further the search for improvement and ways to assist practices in the church that foster change.

Elaine Graham suggests, that practical theology exists at the interface between “the script of revelation given to us in Christ and the ongoing ‘performance’ of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world.”¹² Graham notes that it is “dedicated to enabling the faithful performance of the gospel and to exploring and taking seriously the complex dynamics of the human encounter with God.”¹³ Practical theology also has many subsections: applied theology, missions, evangelism, religious education,

¹⁰ Eduard Thurneysen, *A Theology of Pastoral Care*, trans. Jack A. Worthington and Thomas Wieser (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010).

¹¹ Andrew Root, *Christopraxis: A Practical Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014).

¹² Elaine Graham, “Is Practical Theology a Form of ‘Action Research’?,” *International Journal of practical Theology* 17 (August 1, 2013).

¹³ Graham, “Is Practical Theology a Form of ‘Action Research’?”

pastoral psychology, spiritual and many advocacy theologies that include most theologies of liberation.¹⁴

This attractive process of practical theology builds upon a common practice that includes self-examination. However, this has not, historically, been a common process for black church work, where typically the primary focus is on the leadership and their decisions alone guiding all aspects of the ministries of the church and the sole source of knowledge in fixing whatever is wrong. Most of African-American churches do not build knowledge or wisdom in the pews or seek deliberate attention of skilled workers in the congregation. The church has struggle with areas of communication and processes of healing that is outside of the pastor's knowledges. Andrews writes, "The churches' uncompromising focus on internal power, despite the obvious persistence of suffering and thus, external responsibility, contributes to identity diffusion."¹⁵ This leads to the pursuit of a bridge between the black theology of the church and a practical theology that is both collaborative and effective. This integration process starts with an internal conversation in black church practices that are often fluid but well known within the church. Andrews suggests:

"The prophetic office of black theology requires a methodology grounded in practical theology, which seeks an internal transformation of black religious life-that is, internal to the religious folk tradition. Instead, the dialectic method in black theology has produced an unsuccessful attempt to create resocialization of black churches."¹⁶

¹⁴ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

¹⁵ Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Dale P. Andrews and Robert London Smith Jr., eds., *Black Practical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015).

We Grieve Because Death is the Enemy

Death is not a natural part of life, as some would have us believe. Death is the enemy! Death entered humans as God's curse against sin. Genesis the fifth chapter provides the history of humans and has been marked by the grim notice, he lived so many years, "and he died; ... and he died; etc." As the infidel playwright, George Bernard Shaw, pungently noted, "The statistics on death are quite impressive; one out of one people die."

That death is a curse may be hinted at in the name "*Atad*" (50:10): In Hebrew, it means "thorn bush." It is a flashback to Genesis chapter three, where God declared that as a result of man's sin, the earth would yield thorns. Here, as the funeral procession comes to this threshing floor of the thorn bush, it is a reminder of the curse of death stemming from man's sin. "But didn't Christ conquer death through his resurrection? Doesn't the Bible say that He abolished death (2 Tim. 1:10)? Doesn't death usher us into the presence of Christ? Then how can you say that death is still our enemy?"¹⁷

Yes, Christ conquered death, but that triumph will not be fully realized until He returns to humanity resurrection bodies like His own. Yes, He abolished death, in the sense of breaking its ultimate victory over believers. The Bible never teaches that He abolished death in the sense of making it nonexistent, as the Christian Science denomination teaches. It was not until the Apostle John saw the new heavens and new earth that he stated, "and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain" (Rev.

¹⁷ John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: Second Edition*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014).

21:1, 4). Until then, death is a painful reminder of God's curse upon sin. Humanity grieves because death is the enemy.¹⁸ Concerning death ushering us into the presence of Christ, it's true: "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). That is wonderful for the person who has died in the Lord, but that does not relieve all the pain for those who are left behind.

We Grieve Because Death Separates Us from Loved Ones

Joseph, son of Jacob knew that he would never be able to talk with his father again in this life. Joseph lived for another fifty-four years. I am sure that there were many times during those years that he longed to talk with his dad about something, but he was not there. It is that sense of loneliness, of missing the departed person that makes grief linger, often for years. We must work through our grief to the point where we establish a new "normal," without the deceased person in our lives. That process takes time.¹⁹

In his booklet, "Grief," Dr. Haddon Robinson states that there are three stages of grief through which we normally must pass.²⁰ First is the crisis stage, which lasts up through the funeral. During this stage, a person at first feels shock and then numbness. Crying is a healthy sign of emotional release during this time. To help a person during these difficult hours, your presence is the most important thing. Sit with the person, listen a lot, and say very little. Let the person tell you the details of what happened. You can

¹⁸ Rudolf Bultmann and Robert Morgan, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, 2nd ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007).

¹⁹ Charles Swindoll, *Great Lives Series: Joseph: A Man of Integrity and Forgiveness* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008).

²⁰ Haddon W. Robinson, *Grief* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1996).

gently try to instill hope, but this is not the time to give out familiar Bible verses with the implication, “If you’d just trust God, you wouldn’t feel this way.”²¹

A funeral or memorial service is a helpful part of the grieving process for family and friends. It helps to give a sense of closure to the person’s death. While talking about paying respects to the deceased person, funerals are for the living, not the dead. This huge funeral procession up to Canaan, with all of Pharaoh’s court officials, was not for Jacob; it was for Joseph and his brothers. The Egyptians were showing their respect for Joseph by entering his grief. The seventy days of mourning were just two shorts of the time of mourning for a Pharaoh, which shows how highly Joseph was regarded.²²

Joseph had his father embalmed in accordance with the Egyptian custom, partly so that he could transport his body to Canaan, as Jacob had made him swear. (So, Joseph’s daddy became a mummy). The Bible does not prescribe a method of burial, although the most common practice was to place the corpse in a cave or hewn out tomb. Some Bible teachers argue that cremation dishonors the body, but it appears that it is permissible if a family decides for it. When Christ returns, He can resurrect a cremated body just as easily as a decomposed, buried body.

The main consideration should be the way a family will feel about it later. While putting flowers on a grave seems pointless to some, it can be helpful for a grieving person to go to the gravesite as a place of remembrance and mourning. One cannot do that if the ashes are scattered at sea. Visiting the gravesite of godly family members can help an individual to recall their example and spur us on to follow in their way of life.

²¹ Robinson, *Grief*.

²² Jonker Louis, *Congress Volume Stellenbosch 2016* (Leiden, MA: BRILL, 2017).

Regarding the cost of the funeral, moderation is urged. For a family member of someone of Joseph's rank, it was obviously a huge affair. That was not improper. A family should do what they feel proper within their means as stewards of the Lord's resources. They should think about what they want the funeral to say to friends and relatives. For some, people are bothered when people spend needless thousands of dollars for caskets and flowers. Often the motive for such extravagance is either pride or guilt.²³ Why not give testimony to the person's values by having a simple service with a single bouquet and by giving a large donation to a Christian work? There is freedom in the Lord on these matters, but a family should think it through considering the biblical principles of stewardship and witness.

The second stage of grieving is the crucible stage. This lasts twelve weeks or more and is most intense during the first six weeks. The extended family and friends have left to return to their routines and the grieving one is left alone. During this time, individuals must work through the fact that the dead person will not be a part of their life again. One must deal with emotional ties from the past and with expectations for the future which were bound up with the one who died. Edna St. Vincent Millay captures the feelings of grief during this phase in her poem "Lament," "Life must go on, And the dead be forgotten. Life must go on, Though good men die. Anne, eat your breakfast; Dan, take your medicine; Life must go on, I forget just why."²⁴

²³ Vern L. Bullough, "The Banal and Costly Funeral," accessed May 28, 2018, <https://search.proquest.com/openview/d0d50f167fd782c71172c6ab09b0055c/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1817324>.

²⁴ John Browning, "'Lament' by Edna St. Vincent Millay | Shenandoah," n.d., accessed May 28, 2018, <https://shenandoahliterary.org/blog/2018/03/lament-by-edna-st-vincent-millay/>.

It is not uncommon for a person to have periodic bouts of depression and crying for two or three years after an expected death, let alone after a sudden, unexpected loss. As a friend, being there and listening is again the most helpful thing one can do. Wounds will not be opened if the dead person is mentioned. The grieving person probably feels a need to talk about him.

The final stage is the construction stage, when the grieving person creates new patterns for living that are not tied to the past. This is implied in Genesis 50:14. After burying his father Joseph and his brothers returned to Egypt. At this stage, the person accepts reality and is ready to move on with what God has given him to do with his life. So, as Christians, it is proper to grieve at the death of a loved one but as Paul says, we do not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13).

Though We Grieve, We Have Hope by Faith in God's Promises

Jacob mentions that he is about “to be gathered to his people” (49:29; see also verse 33). While some argue that this phrase is just a Hebrew euphemism for death or for burial in the ancestral burial plot, it can possibly imply more. Jacob was not reunited with his ancestors when his body was carried into the cave of Machpelah, where their bodies lay. His soul was gathered to the souls of his ancestors in heaven the moment he expired. So, the expression is an early statement of the hope of life after death. Two thoughts on hope is that one must exercise hope in God's promises by faith and one must extend hope to those who are without God and have no hope.

The author of Hebrews makes the point that the greats of the faith died without receiving the promises (Heb. 11:39). God had promised Jacob the land of Canaan, but

here he was, dying in Egypt, with no claim on Canaan except a burial plot. God had promised to make him a great nation, but he was only a company of seventy strong when he entered Egypt.²⁵

By faith, God blessed his sons and predicted their future as the twelve tribes of the Nation Israel. By faith Jacob made Joseph promise to take his body back to Canaan. Jacob could have been buried in the finest of Egyptian tombs, but Jacob chose to make a statement in his death about his resolute trust in what God had promised. So, he said, “Bury me in the cave ... in the land of Canaan” (49:30). Jacob’s faith gave him hope in God’s promises, hope that sustained him as he faced death.²⁶

How do Christians know that their hope in God’s promise of eternal life is not just wishful thinking? What if Christians die and there is nothing else? How do we know that loved ones who have died in Christ are in heaven, and that we will be with them someday?

The Apostle Paul deals with all these questions. In 1 Corinthians the fifteenth, he argues that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the basis for our future resurrection. He shows that Christ’s resurrection has solid evidence supporting it and argues that if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is worthless. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul argues that the resurrection of Christ is the basis for our hope of being reunited with our loved ones who have died in Christ.

Even though Christians have that solid evidence, they must exercise faith in God’s promises when faced with death, simply because they have not gone beyond the

²⁵ Joseph Telushkin, *Biblical Literacy: The Most Important People, Events, and Ideas of the Hebrew Bible*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2002).

²⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

grave and returned but Jesus has, and Christians can take Him at His word. When Christians take Jesus at his word, He gives genuine hope in the face of our greatest enemy.

Both the Canaanites (50:11) and the Egyptians observed Joseph during his grief. No doubt the Egyptians wondered why Jacob wanted to be buried in some cave in Canaan, when he could have had a beautiful tomb in Egypt. James Boice observes, “If Joseph had not expressed grief over the death of his beloved father; the Egyptians would have concluded merely that he had not cared for him, that perhaps he was even glad to have the old man out of the way. If he had expressed nothing but grief, the Egyptians may have concluded that the hope of an afterlife by these Semitic people was no better than their own dark hopes and may even have been inferior to theirs.”²⁷ Boice goes on to argue that Joseph undoubtedly used the occasion of the funeral and the trip back to Canaan to tell his Egyptian friends about his hope in the living God.

The time of death and funerals can be a great opportunity for witness to those who otherwise put death and eternity out of their minds. Christians should always be sensitive, but also, they must be bold, in telling others of the hope of the gospel at such times. The late Joseph Bayly was a godly man who knew grief through the death of three of his children, but who also knew the hope that is in Christ. The day after he and his wife buried their five-year-old boy, who died of leukemia, Bayly went to thank the doctor who had been so kind to them through their ordeal. As he sat in the waiting room, the receptionist beckoned to him and whispered that a little boy playing in the waiting room had the same problem as his son had.

²⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1986).

Bayly sat down next to the boy's mother. They were far enough away from the boy, so they could talk. "It's hard bringing him in here every two weeks for these tests, isn't it?" Bayly didn't ask a question; he stated a fact. "Hard?" She was silent for a moment. "I die every time. And now he's beginning to sense that something's wrong ..." Her voice trailed off. "It's good to know, isn't it," Bayly spoke slowly, choosing his words with unusual care, "that even though the medical outlook is hopeless, we can have hope for our children in such a situation. "We can be sure that after our child dies, he'll be completely removed from sickness and suffering and everything like that and be completely well and happy." "If I could only believe that," the woman replied. "But I don't. When he dies, I'll just have to cover him up with dirt and forget I ever had him." She turned back to watching her little boy push a toy auto on the floor. "I'm glad I don't feel that way." Bayly didn't want to say it, but he felt compelled. "Why?" This time the woman didn't turn toward Bayly but kept watching her child. "Because we covered our little boy up with dirt yesterday afternoon and I'm in here to thank the doctor for his kindness today." "You look like a rational person." (Bayly was glad she didn't say, "I'm sorry.") She was looking straight at him now. "How can you possibly believe that the death of a man, or a little boy, is any different from the death of an animal?" Although Bayly ends the story there, I'm sure that he went on to tell her the basis for his hope in Jesus Christ.²⁸

Theology of Ministry

Wimberly, talks about catastrophic loss, "public and corporate lament is a resilient practice."²⁹ First, lament provides connection with God, who is the ultimate source of new opportunities and hidden resources for bouncing back from loss, devastation, and catastrophe. Second in addition, public, and corporate grieving are re-villaging practices as well. They assist in the symbolic function of re-villaging by bringing to life certain narratives, metaphors, and images that embody the spiritual

²⁸ Bayly, *The Last Thing We Talk About*.

²⁹ Edward P. Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

resources of the faith tradition.³⁰ Many examples can be found in many psalms and laments found in the Book of Job.

Wimberly, on the nature of storytelling, stories can be used to address the normal crisis people face daily such as birth, a child's first day at school or at day care; transitions from childhood to adolescence or from adolescence to adulthood; and mid-life, old-age, and death transitions.³¹

Story-listening involves empathically hearing the story of the person involved in life struggles. Being able to communicate to that person in need is cared for and understood is a result of attending to the story of the person as he or she talks. Empathy means that we attend to the person with our presence, body posture, and nonverbal responses. It also means using verbal responses to communicate that we have understood and are seeking to understand the person's story as it is unfolding.

Edward Wimberly suggests that we must look at the total ministries within the church to create a theology that supports healing in the church community. Wimberly states "caring a local black congregation is a response pattern to God's unfolding story within its midst. This unfolding story is one of liberation as well as healing, sustaining guiding and reconciling. As a response to God's story, the caring response of the local black church, as well as those outside the church, to God's unfailing story."³² Wimberly

³⁰ Tapiwa N. Mucherera, "Pastoral Formation of Counselors in Intercultural Societies," *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 8, no. 3-4 (February 7, 2006): 99-111.

³¹ Edward P. Wimberly, "Unnoticed and Unloved: The Indigenous Storyteller and Public Theology in a Postcolonial Age," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32, no. 2 (December 12, 2011): 9.

³² Edward P. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008).

continues by noting that “caring is a ministry of the church and cannot be understood apart from ecclesiology or theology.”³³

In some denominations, that practice Christianity, the care of souls is the exercise by pastor and leaders with various offices in the church. This typically embraces instruction, by sermons, rebukes and administration of rituals, to the flock over which they have authority from the church.

Whether one is pastor or parishioner in the “work” of the church, the question which attacks us is, “Who cares?” If Christians are serious about their faith walk their life reflecting the God in Community, then this question becomes critical to the church. What does all this mean that church is losing it battle against its own efforts? Can the proper balance between of pastors, ministers and the flock function so that caring can prevail, without the Christian’s work?

An example is specific to the pastor-pew breakdown, especially with African American congregations of faith. Pastors allow themselves to take on the role of all knowing and the congregations accepts it. Pastors must change the atmosphere of that will not allow pastor to seek their limitation and force congregation to move beyond their brokenness to seek proper help. The prophet Micah raises the question of who cares but does not stop there but places responsibility within the theological understanding of God to do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God.³⁴ Changes the air in many faith communities will mean a new theology, the pastor is always seen as the answer or at least has the greatest connection to the answer. The atmosphere needed in the church is

³³ Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care*.

³⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Amazed*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010).

one in which each will see the determination of the person who, when asked "Who cares?" will respond "I care!" enough to get the help and options needed.

The myth in some communities and churches, Thomas says, may believe that if children are not visibly grieving, they are not grieving. "Grief is the internal response and mourning is the external response to loss. Kids may not be showing grief on the outside, but they're grieving tremendously on the inside."³⁵ When a death occurs, children, like adults, Thomas explains, "go into a shocked, numb like state. It seems as if a shutter comes down in our brain, protecting us from the intensity of the grief experience, and as the weeks and months go on, that shutter slowly goes back up. However, with children, that shutter seems to stay down a bit longer."³⁶ Children are not likely to exhibit intense reactions early on, even in the first year. "But that doesn't mean that down the road they may not have some intense reactions," according to Thomas.³⁷

In addition, grieving is cyclical.

As kids reach new developmental levels, they're going to reintegrate aspects of the grief process using newly acquired processes and skills. Kids will re-grieve these important losses at different times in their lives. For example, a girl who loses her mom may have more intense grief reactions at key points in her life such as when she starts to develop physically, when she goes out on her first date, goes to the prom, when she gets married.³⁸

It is not always possible for adults to accurately perceive whether or how a child is grieving. Adults may expect to gauge emotion through tears or verbal expression of emotions. And while those may be present, children will behave in different ways and often in a manner that may not outwardly appear to adults to manifest grief. "Kids will

³⁵ Pamela Thomas, *Fatherless Daughters: Turning the Pain of Loss into the Power of Forgiveness* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2018).

³⁶ Thomas, *Fatherless Daughters*.

³⁷ Thomas, *Fatherless Daughters*.

³⁸ Thomas, *Fatherless Daughters*, 122.

have a wide range of reactions, just as adults do, from sadness to anger to rage to confusion and relief,” DeCristofaro says.³⁹ They may use more than their verbal language to communicate their feelings, she says, also expressing their emotions, for example, through art or play. Adults, she says, must recognize that just because children or teens do not verbalize their feelings, it does not mean they are not missing the deceased or feeling sorrow. Depending on the child’s age and level of understanding, Tecala agrees, grief may variously be expressed in vastly different ways, in one child by acting out and in another by silence and withdrawal.⁴⁰

As children and teens grapple with what it means to die and struggle to comprehend death’s permanence, Thomas says, they may exhibit regressive behaviors such as bedwetting, thumb sucking, separation anxiety, feelings of insecurity, and needing to sleep with parents, especially younger children. “The older they get, the more able they are to understand death and they begin to be able to express their grief more in words, but the younger they are, the more grief comes out in their behavior. Older children may exhibit anger, aggression, or risk-taking behaviors.”⁴¹

Silence Is Not Golden

Among the reasons why children may not verbalize their grief is that they take cues from adults. “They may not feel safe because no one has asked them,” DeCristofaro

³⁹ Jana DeCristofaro and Casey Jarman, “Meet Two Portland Women Who Make Their Livings Talking about the Ultimate Taboo: Death,” *Willamette Week*, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://www.wweek.com/news/2016/10/19/meet-two-portland-women-who-make-their-livings-talking-about-the-ultimate-taboo-death/>.

⁴⁰ Robert T. Hall and Mila Ruiz Tecala, *Grief and Loss: Identifying and Proving Damages in Wrongful Death Cases* (Portland, OR: Trial Guides, 2009).

⁴¹ David J. Schonfeld and Thomas Demaria, “Supporting the Grieving Child and Family,” *Pediatrics* 138, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): e20162147.

explains.⁴² Sometimes, within the family, the child gets signals that talking is wrong or hurtful. They notice or fear that if they bring up the subject, they will create more sadness and more tears. “Adults might assume that children are better off not thinking about or talking about the person who died. They might remove pictures or avoid talking about the deceased in the presence of children,” McNiel says. In response, the children will retreat in silence.⁴³

It is not uncommon for children to experience feelings of guilt following a loss (particularly when the deceased is a parent), triggered by the perception they may have somehow contributed to the death. “Because children are ego-centric and view life through a 'magical' lens, they will often feel that they somehow caused the person to die.”⁴⁴ They may feel that if they were better behaved the parent would still be alive, or that there was something they could have done to prevent the death. This guilt may arise as well if a child had quarreled with the person before the death and concluded, “I wished him dead and it happened. It is magical thinking, but it can create havoc in a child's psychological well-being.”⁴⁵

When those around the child encourage silence and fail to allow the child the freedom to express these feelings, they may persist. They will need a lot of reassurance, DeCristofaro says, to understand that they did not influence events and that there was nothing they could have done to prevent a death. It does not help to prevent children from

⁴² Jana DeCristofaro, “Grief Out Loud,” accessed May 28, 2018, <http://deardougy.libsyn.com/>.

⁴³ Andy McNiel and Pamela Gabbay, *Understanding and Supporting Bereaved Children: A Practical Guide for Professionals*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2017).

⁴⁴ McNeil and Gabbay, *Understanding and Supporting Bereaved Children*, 47.

⁴⁵ Hall and Tecala, *Grief and Loss*.

discussing their feelings, but, on the other hand, it is also not helpful, McNiel says, to force children to talk about or express their grief.

Another persistent myth is that the truth is harmful to children or that children are too young to handle the truth about how a person died and about what it means to be dead. “This doesn't protect a child from grief, it only leaves the child to grieve alone.”⁴⁶ Younger children may have little understanding of what death is and what it means. This confusion, says DeCristofaro, “can get compounded using euphemisms such as 'we lost him,' or 'he expired.' The things we say to soften the experience can be very confusing.”⁴⁷

Experts agree, the truth is preferable to lying, which fosters mistrust, and clear language can help a child better understand the phenomenon of death and its permanence, as well as the pain of an individual loss. At the Dougy Center, adults are encouraged to use concrete language when discussing or explaining death to children. “It’s painful for adults to share information, and they may be fearful about how the child is going to respond.” Children need to understand, when a person dies, “that the person's heart stopped, that he doesn't breathe or sleep anymore, that we won't see him again.”⁴⁸

Certainly, one should consider a child's age in sharing age-appropriate details, and there is no reason to share gruesome details, but whatever is shared with a child should be built upon the truth. When the caregivers in a child's life establish open dialogue about the death, the child often will return with more specific questions as he or she clarifies his or her understanding of what happened. This is true in the case of suicide and homicide as well as other types of death.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ McNeil and Gabbay, *Understanding and Supporting Bereaved Children*, 72.

⁴⁷ DeCristofaro and Jarmen, “Meet Two Portland Women.”

⁴⁸ DeCristofaro, “Grief Out Loud.”

⁴⁹ McNeil and Gabbay, *Understanding and Supporting Bereaved Children*, 72.

Rituals Are Not for Adults Only

Adults are known to commonly believe that children are too young to attend or even discuss a funeral. “The reality, though, is that children are capable of participating in family rituals,” says McNeil, who offers the following caveats, “Children should not be forced to participate or to talk about the person who died. They should be prepared about what they might see or hear when participating and then given the option of whether to participate. A plan for an early departure should be put in place in case the child should become overwhelmed and ask to leave.”⁵⁰

As with adults, grief in children does not have a timeline but while adults may be able to begin to come to terms with loss within a relatively brief time, children, Tecala says, cannot do so until they are in their mid-20s. “It is only at that time that their brains are fully developed that they have the ability to complete the process of reconciling to the death.”⁵¹ They not only need to be given the time to cope, Tecala says, without being made to feel baby-ish for having difficulty adjusting to a death but they also need to be supported throughout life stages and when issues resulting from grief reappear. As we have examined theological views on grief and loss, theoretically many cultures handle the issues differently as well.

⁵⁰ McNeil and Gabbay, *Understanding and Supporting Bereaved Children*, 72.

⁵¹ Hall and Tecala, *Grief and Loss*.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Christ brings comfort to His children through the church. When Jesus gives Christians, His representatives on earth, in pastors, preachers, ministers, and counselors it is an opportunity to comfort and protect those experiencing loss. Christians should not take it lightly but, think of it as a mandate for the church. Every church must develop their own plan for families to create a healthy pew, as well as a healthy pulpit.

In examining the use of grief and loss counseling to provide and support healing in the pews, it is the church leaders that must understand that, loss is coming, it is already here, probably sooner than later. Pastors should take the time to make sure their people will represent Christ in the best way possible.

Many other disciplines have understood the need for integrating healing with creating supportive foundations for families. This is a listing of model utilized in churches and a partnership model utilizing education as the theoretical framework. It is important as leaders examine the models that maintain three vital steps. This theoretical outline will examine church models that utilize the concept of loss and grief counseling for children. Second, we will dialogue with the social boundary of health care use of collaboration in the delivery of services, seek out contemporary theories and finally address how the theoretical discussion gives a sharper focus for the project.

Loss is tough. Although everyone handles loss and grief differently, however, nobody handles it easily and especially, not children. Respectively, cultures grieve differently when dealing with losses. How and to whom American ascribe themselves differs from one culture to another. For example, in the African-American community, it is not unusual for “play”-kin to be granted honorary kin status and operate as family. These behaviors date back to slavery when individuals would be separated from birth relatives and had to create close bonds with others to survive, making them family.¹ Even then, such losses created a brokenness that has created a continual such for family. Thereby, creating the dynamic in black churches that rely so heavily on the concept of family within the church. This helps to create the need for the church to be a place and source for healing.

Loss hurts, and grief is an important component that can be the ointment that helps to heal when it is permitted to do its work appropriately. One of the first step in management of grief is to recognize that the pain is real and a typical part of the process. It needs to be accepted, not avoided.

Children and Grief

Karen Sampson, social worker writes in the “Leaven,” *Journal of Christian Ministry*, “The beginning of being able to comfort a child over a loss is to see it through his eyes, to value the loss as he does.”² The church has a major opportunity to work closely with children and youth in giving them vision and hope. Sampson continues by

¹ Joyce Aschenbrenner, “Extended Families Among Black Americans,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 4, no. 2 (1973): 257–268.

² Karen Sampson, “Children and Grief,” *Leaven* 2, no. 2 (July 20, 2012), <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol2/iss2/9>.

stating that “much of what we can do for grieving children is much more effectively accomplished as an inoculation rather than as medicine administered after the fact.”³ It is the challenge of those working in the church working with caregivers, parents and community to create a balance for when and how children are exposed to grief. The African-American church often brushes aside the importance of allowing grief to run its course.

In order not to stall or divert the process of grief in children, Sampson recommends four steps be used in helping children. She states,

1. The task is to accept the reality and extent of the loss.
2. To sever emotional ties and to adjust to the environment in which they are missing.
3. The child must complete a memory of the lost person and incorporate some aspects of that person into his life.
4. Finally, the child must complete the task of withdrawing emotional energy from the lost relationship.⁴

How do we sustain grief effort for children and youth and their families? It is a simple analysis into their frame of mind that will broaden the church’s work with children and youth. Adults and youth are often unwilling or unable to share with professional counselors but the desire to address life’s pains and hurt must undergird the need for new ministries for change. The shortcoming of parents, the lack of listening ears in community, is starting points for grief exploration.

³ Sampson, “*Children and Grief*.”

⁴ Sampson, “*Children and Grief*.”

Anna Laurie and Robert Neimeyer writes in their article “African American in Bereavement: Grief as a Function of Ethnicity” that there are differences in the way African-Americans experience grief compared to whites. The study focused on over 1,500 students attending the University of Memphis in Tennessee. The study found that African Americans more often described a stronger ongoing bond with loved one’s loss. The study noted that African Americans conveyed more complicated grief symptoms than whites.⁵

According to Laurie and Neimeyer:

A large body of research in both the medical and mental health fields indicates that African Americans do not use professional services at the same rate as other cultural groups (e.g., Bouleware, Cooper, Ratner, LaVeist, & Powe, 2003; Neighbors, Musick, & Williams, 1988; Washington, 1997). Barrett (1998) notes the underutilization of mental health services by grieving African Americans and attributes the cause to a cultural mistrust of institutionalized healthcare. Boyd-Franklin and Lockwood (1999) describe cultural mistrust as arising from the racism and discrimination endured by African Americans, which has ultimately led to reservations to disclose private information publicly, even in the context of a professional or therapeutic relationship. Given that African Americans have a history of being impinged upon by the welfare, legal, school and housing systems, a disinclination to use public mental health services is to be expected (Bouleware et al., 2003; Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 1996).⁶

The need for church to use all the tools necessary from other disciplines is vital to effectively addressing the needs of its congregants. Laurie and Neimeyer writes, “Given that African-American life in general is distinctly different than that of the dominant culture, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the African-American expression and experience of grief will likewise be unique.”⁷

⁵ Anna Laurie and Robert A. Neimeyer, “African Americans in Bereavement: Grief as a Function of Ethnicity,” *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 57, no. 2 (October 1, 2008): 173–193.

⁶ Laurie and Neimeyer, “African Americans in Bereavement,” 173–193.

⁷ Paul C. Rosenblatt and Beverly R. Wallace, *African American Grief*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

Church Models

Good Mourning Ministries is in Plymouth, Michigan and began in Our Lady of Good Counsel Roman Catholic Church. The ministry defines itself as a bereavement apostolate and a resource to Catholic parishes offering hope and healing to those who are mourning the loss of loved one. Their quest is become bearers of hope. To be intentional and transformational in their work, providing prayerful, practical and personal grief support. They believe they can help equip grieving people with the tools they will need to build their bridge that will lead them into a new and different life.⁸

Good Mourning Ministries expounded on initial work to develop “Grieving with Great Hope.”⁹ The program has a three-fold directive for assisting host hurting in countless congregations is outlined in the program ministry objectives. The process of healing begins with prayer. About 1/3rd of every Grieving with Great HOPE ministry workshop is spent in church where they come together as a community of faith to become disciples of hope.¹⁰

There are no stages to grief. Individuals experience loss in their own unique way. In another one-third of this workshop, they come to learn the intentional process of mourning. Through this process, individuals understand practical things they can do to help heal wounds and build bridges to a new and different life. Christ is the role model. He wept. He prayed. He accepted His Cross with great love and great hope. “Grieving

⁸ “Good Mourning Ministry,” Good Mourning Ministry, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://goodmourningministry.net/>.

⁹ “About Workshop,” Good Mourning Ministry, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://www.goodmourningministry.net/ministry.html>.

¹⁰ “DVD-Series,” Good Mourning Ministry, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://www.goodmourningministry.net/DVD-Series.html>.

with Great Hope combines practical wisdom, personal sharing, and meaningful ritual that together point people back to Christ for healing of their hearts.¹¹

Validation is an important part of the healing process. This gives a sense that individuals are not alone. The balance of the time is spent in small self-facilitating grief peer groups. These groups are formed based on age and loss and establish a safe environment to openly share thoughts and feelings. As disciples of hope in the body of Christ, they help each other mourn their loss and find the way through grief.¹²

Each of these objectives is a vital part of the ministry delivery for Great Hope. It gives the ministry insight that allow them to reach a broader audience for service. Great Hope's grief counseling professionals concentrate in work with clients who are managing deep loss—whether this is the death, injury, divorce, or other substantial personal loss including abandonment.

The Grieving with Great Hope, DVD Series designed to bring hope and healing to as a means of outreach. It was filmed at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Plymouth Michigan designed to help a host church or group have a successful prayerful, practical and personal workshop. Adults play a significant role in helping children grieve and understand both the good and bad things that create the environment in which they live. Children operate with loss in many ways, but the pain will remain unless adults can support them through a process of seeing understanding the “why” in abandonment.¹³

¹¹ “About Workshop,” Good Mourning Ministry, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://www.goodmourningministry.net/ministry.html>.

¹² “About Workshop,” Good Mourning Ministry, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://www.goodmourningministry.net/ministry.html>.

¹³ Catherine McCall, “How to Help Children Deal with Loss,” *Psychology Today*, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/overcoming-child-abuse/201107/how-help-children-deal-loss>.

African-American Faith Based Bereavement Initiative

The African-American Faith Based Bereavement Initiative was created explicitly for the African-American Christian faith community to improve supports for families experiencing losses. The initiative is made up of ministers, psychologists, pastoral counselors, educators, nurses, and physicians who are working at the national and regional level to enhance support for African-American families experiencing a fetal, infant or child death. The AAFBBI is a program within the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development.

Goals of the African-American Faith-based Bereavement Initiative

The initiative leadership identified the following goals:

- To increase the capacity of faith-based communities to provide bereavement support to its parishioners and surrounding communities impacted by fetal or infant losses by addressing the attitudes and beliefs that inhibit the grief process.
- To reduce depression and anxiety among families experiencing fetal and infant losses by building the capacity of faith-based communities to promote the use of mental health services by addressing the attitudes and beliefs that inhibit seeking of mental health services.
- To enhance the capacity of faith-based communities to promote the use of mental health services by addressing attitudes and beliefs that inhibit accessing such services among families that experience fetal and infant losses.¹⁴

To shape the capacity within the faith-based communities served; the initiative plan is to encourage conceptual care for families.

The program is focuses on an eight modules curriculum. The curriculum includes the following focus. While this program focused primarily on the loss of a child either

¹⁴ “African American Faith-Based Bereavement Initiative,” Georgetown University, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/aafbbs/index.html>.

during pregnancy or infant loss the topics are generic enough to work within many faith-based communities.

- Module 1: Why do we care? Opening our eyes to our community's pain.
- Module 2: Why do we care? The pain can last a lifetime
- Module 3: Holding Up the mirror for clergy
- Module 4: What do we really know about the grief process?
- Module 5: What families need
- Module 6: What congregations can do
- Module 7: When our love is not enough—connecting families to bereavement support services
- Module 8: Summary - A beacon of hope and support.¹⁵

The program provides inspiration and training and offers encouragement for families that need the need assistance in coping with loss.

Education Framework

Mourning Hope Grief Center is in Lincoln, Nebraska. The Mourning Hope Grief Center began in 1994 by founders, Pam Fuhr Dinneen and Kay Kronholm, both public educators, school counselors and crisis response team members. Pam and Kay had supported grieving children, teens and their families throughout their professional careers, and began investigating the community supports available to grieving families in Nebraska. Finding very limited resources, Pam and Kay attended numerous grief seminars, including training at The Dougy Center in Portland, Oregon.¹⁶ Throughout their travels and studies, they received the tools needed to develop a board of directors and establish the Mourning Hope Grief Center.

¹⁵ “African American Faith-Based Bereavement Initiative,” Georgetown University, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/aafbbi/index.html>.

¹⁶ “The Dougy Center | The Dougy Center for Grieving Children and Families | Portland, OR,” Dougy, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://www.dougy.org/>.

Mourning Hope founders closely assessed various theoretical approaches to grief and developed the core ten-week program at the suggestion of mentor, author and trainer Dr. Alan Wolfelt. The ten-week program holds a philosophy of companioning people through their loss, allowing the griever to teach what they need to heal on their grief journey. The companioning model suggests that griever embrace and explore the painful experience of grief in a safe, supportive environment. Thus, the name Mourning Hope was chosen because they believe in the healing power of mourning together which will give hope for a future to live, love and laugh again.¹⁷

The first support group met in the fall of 1994 at the Belmont Recreation Center. The group consisted of teens in addition to a support group for their caregivers. After the first group was held, families requested support for younger kids. Mourning Hope moved to the Sheridan Lutheran Church basement and began offering groups for elementary, middle, and high school aged children and their caregivers. As the program grew, a larger space was needed, and Mourning Hope moved to Lux Middle School to accommodate the increase in participants and volunteers for the weekly series. While at Lux, Mourning Hope began to offer professional workshops to counselors and teachers to assist them in their daily work with grieving children. Mourning Hope also occupied space at Garner Industries and Lincoln Medical Education Foundation, before finally moving to 4919 Baldwin Avenue where they are presently located.

The mission of Mourning Hope is to provide companions, grieving children, teens, young adults and their families when someone significant in their lives has a serious illness or has died. Mourning Hope provides support groups, community

¹⁷ Alan D. Wolfelt, *Companioning the Bereaved: A Soulful Guide for Counselors and Caregivers*, 1st ed. (Fort Collins, CO: Companion Press, 2005).

education, grief resources and referrals. Mourning Hope Grief Center will be recognized as the premier provider of grief support services for youth and their families in Lincoln and surrounding communities. Mourning Hope envisions a society which values and encourages healthy grieving practices. The center will serve as a haven of support, hope, companionship and unconditional acceptance for each person seeking assistance.

Through innovative programming, specialized support services, and knowledgeable instruction, Mourning Hope will foster a healthy response to grief, one child and one family at a time.

The principles of Mourning Hope envision a society where all grieving children are embraced, listened to, understood and effectively supported by their families, teachers, caregivers and others significant in their lives. “We envision that within each grieving family, parents and caregivers’ model healthy grieving strategies, while understanding the unique needs of their youth. We envision a society which values and encourages healthy grieving practices such as openness to talking about losses, embracing the pain of loss, remembering those who died, searching for meaning and giving and receiving ongoing support.”

Through best practices, education and innovation, we will measurably improve the lives of individuals in the communities we serve.

School-Based Grief Support Groups

Mourning Hope recognizes that transportation and family schedules often prohibit bereaved youth from attending a grief support group at the center. In order to increase Mourning Hope's reach to grieving students in the Lincoln community, Mourning Hope

partners with Lincoln Public Schools to offer school-based grief support groups for bereaved students. An eight-week, peer support group model was launched several years ago out of the need to reach grieving children and teens where they spend most of their time, in their schools.

Children's school bereavement groups offer a safe, natural environment for children to support one another. These groups help prevent negative consequences related to unresolved childhood grief such as difficulty with classroom concentration, behavioral problems, social isolation and withdrawal, depression, truancy, substance abuse and even suicide. One of the greatest program benefits is for youth recognizing they are not alone in their grief.

These school-based services occur weekly during school hours and are co-facilitated by a Lincoln Public School Employee and a Mourning Hope Trained Facilitator. Groups are designed to support grieving youth of various ages. All materials are supplied by Mourning Hope and there is no cost for the school or the youth to participate in any of these programs.

Support Coalition

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is a unique collaboration of the leading professional organizations representing classroom educators, principals, assistant principals, superintendents, school board members, and central office staff, student support personnel (including school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, school social workers, and other student support personnel), and other school professionals who have come together with a common conviction: grieving students need

the support and care of the school community. The Coalition's purpose is to create and share a set of industry-endorsed resources that will empower school communities across America in the ongoing support of their grieving students.

Framework for Ministry

Growing up with a missing parent can leave children, young adults and adults with a profound sense of shame and loss. When the absence appears voluntary the pain and hurt can be even more intense. From a child's viewpoint, it is hard to envisage a parent electing not to share in the lives of their children without there being a respectable reason. Ultimately, many children remain vulnerable to the portrayal of assuming that it must be their fault or that something is wrong with them. This anxiety and guilt can leave many children, youth, young adults and even many adults feeling fundamentally unworthy. The Sesame Street in community program which is an alternative educational training and support materials for those seeking to address concerns and issues that are often identified in children that deal with issues of abandonment, which is manifested as grief, the same as a death of a love one.

Sesame Street Community

Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street and so much more. The mission is to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. Sesame Workshop is at work in more than 150 countries, using the power of

media and the beloved Muppets to meet children’s development needs with critical early education, social impact programs, and a large dose of fun!¹⁸

Every day, the organization make a difference by helping kids and families grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. These types of organizations unite communities, foster families’ and kids’ resilience, nurture their physical and mental health, and provide critical early learning opportunities. These organizations are an important part of the “circle of care” that surrounds the families and kids who need it most. Sesame Street can be implemented in Communities to support communities.¹⁹

Here, you’ll find hundreds of bilingual multi-media tools to help kids and families enrich and expand knowledge. The resources engage kids and adults in everyday moments and daily routines, from teaching early math and literacy concepts, to encouraging families to eat nutritious foods, to serious topics such as divorce and food insecurity.

Sesame Street in Communities builds on the almost fifty-year commitment to addressing kids’ developmental, physical, and emotional needs. The time-tested research model and thorough testing with families and providers ensures that these resources have a measurable impact in the lives of parents and children.²⁰

¹⁸ “Sesame Street,” accessed May 28, 2018, <https://www.sesamestreet.org/>.

¹⁹ “Home,” Sesame Street in Communities, n.d., accessed May 28, 2018, <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/>.

²⁰ “About Us,” Sesame Street in Communities, n.d., accessed May 28, 2018, <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/about-us/>.

Funding Partners

As the founding funding partner for Sesame Street in Communities, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has been instrumental in this critically needed initiative. Major support from RWJF made possible the initial research and development phase for Sesame Street in communities and is expanding the reach of the initiative's robust web-based platform and on-the-ground implementation activities to ensure access to Sesame Workshop's time-tested resources for parents and providers across the US. Through this groundbreaking partnership, RWJF and Sesame Workshop are furthering a shared commitment to enhance the well-being of all children.²¹

The Sesame Street program not only focuses on helping children cope with death and loss. Coping with the death or loss for any reason of a loved one brings enormous challenges for the whole family. Grieving may never completely end but working through the difficult feelings can become easier with time. Through support, open conversations, and finding ways to keep the person's memory alive, families can begin healing together.²²

The program also utilizes the traumatic experiences of death, loss and divorce all of which can lead to trauma in the lives of children. When a child endures a traumatic experience, the whole family feels the impact. Adults hold the power to help lessen its effects. Several factors can change the course of kids' lives such as feeling seen and

²¹ "Sesame Street in Communities," *RWJF*, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://www.rwjf.org/en/how-we-work/grants-explorer/featured-programs/sesame-street-in-communities.html>.

²² Brook Noel and Pamela Blair, *I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping and Healing After the Sudden Death of a Loved One*, updated ed. (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2008).

heard by a caring adult, being patiently taught coping strategies and resilience-building techniques and being with adults who know about the effects of such experiences.²³

The Sesame Street community also builds up other loss curriculum to deal specifically with divorce and loss in families. This would allow churches and counselors to create new methods for opening-up conversation. Separation and divorce mean difficult transitions, but they are also opportunities to learn that everything is always changing, in ways big and small. With love and support from the adults in their lives, children can emerge feeling stronger.²⁴

The focus on coping with parents lost to incarceration is one that very few churches or even prison organizations focus on the loss that is created with families. The incarceration of a loved one can be overwhelming for both children and caregivers. Due to the feeling of stigma, it takes special effort to start important conversations and answer kids' questions. Parents can comfort children and guide them through difficult moments just by talking. With love and support, the family can cope with the challenges of incarceration together.²⁵

Healthy growth requires satisfactory emotional care and physical, and loss can result in feelings of abandonment. Sometimes experiences of grief can create a traumatic event in a person's life. The withdrawal of a parent is traumatic and removes children or even adult's ability to feel safe due to menacing circumstances.

²³ "Traumatic Experiences," Sesame Street in Communities, n.d., accessed May 28, 2018, <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/traumatic-experiences/>.

²⁴ "Dealing with Divorce," Sesame Street in Communities, n.d., accessed May 28, 2018, <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/divorce/>.

²⁵ "Coping with Incarceration," Sesame Street in Communities, n.d., accessed May 28, 2018, <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/incarceration/>.

Adults who experienced abandonment as children may still be confronted by feelings associated with abandonment and loss if they do not grieve the loss. Whether an act of loss or abandonment happens in childhood or adulthood, the influence can be inescapable, destructively affecting every relationship in life, regardless of the kind of relationships are social, personal or professional.

It is important that not only the educational system utilize methods of dealing with grief, but the church as must play a vital role in the healing that can only be found through developing grief programs that meet the needs of the congregants. This must include a model for examining the past and moving forward to the future to strengthen families for wholeness. The church must build the kinds of relationships that does not foster people living constantly with pain and loss, by declaring that you are required to just go through it; because “if I suffer, I will gain eternal life.” It must be revisited by the church to support the needs of children, adolescents and adulthood.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

This project demonstrates the notion that ministers can work together to learn and to share time and place. The evidence suggests that everyone needs support, reassurance, and some education and information following bereavement. This may be provided by family, friends, or clergy in an informal way, by laypeople in similar circumstances, by a community support group, or by health professionals. First, given the fact that Baptist churches are not considered to be connectional church like Methodist or Catholic, rather they are independently organized and operated on the local church level. They are not governed by bishops or presiding elders who can direct ministers to work together, they are not compelled in any way to cooperate with any movement or cause. Nevertheless, this project validates that ministers can mobilize to address the issues of grief and loss to project their respective congregations who are suffering from damage and harm. There is no evidence that all bereaved people need or want formal interventions, though mutual support groups may fill a gap for those who have little other social support. There is some evidence to suggest that intervention programs help people to move faster through the grieving process, but ultimately most people get through it regardless of whether they have formal support. When a cause such as grief or loss become an urgent and common problem for congregations, ministers stepped up to share their location and valuable time and resources to address these problems to overcome the despair of their flocks.

Moreover, they are willing to learn from experts because they know that these problems are larger than their abilities or expertise to address alone; they are acknowledging their ignorance and humbling themselves to cover their congregations.

Second, this project proves there exist an atmosphere among Baptist congregations that supports ministry services because ministers believe preaching and teaching are not enough to address issues that are best addressed by counseling experts. Moreover, there was an atmosphere of hospitality that welcomes strangers or outsiders because they understand what God said to the Hebrews, namely the Hebrews were once widows, orphans, and strangers, and God expected them to welcome the same. In the New Testament, Jesus redefines who was a stranger when asked by a scribe or lawyer. Jesus says, in a parable, that the neighbor was not a Priest or a Levite, who crossed the streets to avoid a stranger beaten badly and left for dead in a ditch, but a despised Samaritan who was hated by the Jews was a true neighbor. Likewise, when we conducted this study in five churches, we were treated in such a way as we had never left our own home church. We were given access to the congregations who provided the data we needed and helped to support all the ministry services needed to complete this project.

Though many have suggested that the black church is dead or irrelevant in the community, we found evidence that suggests the church's authority and relevance in the community was extremely important and essential for the its survival. Like during the Civil Rights Movement, the church still provides a base for any movement when called upon, and the church continues to represent a haven from all disasters and calamities.

Finally, I gained a greater understanding and sense of how to take the knowledge gained in this project to address other issues and concerns that this community may face.

This community is resilient and steadfast and stands ready to face any calamity that they may face. Be it a natural disaster or threats from within or outside of the community, this project discovered that this community stands ready to address any foe or fiend.

Methodology

The central procedure for this project was a theology-in-action or praxis that reflected the model in the Road to Emmaus where two Jews walked along the way reflecting on what recently happened about the death of Jesus. As they walked, Jesus appeared and continued their reflection by referring to all the evidence that predicted why it was necessary that Jesus must suffer and die. After remaining overnight and serving breakfast the next morning, Jesus disappears, and the two Jews return to Jerusalem where the action was taking place. Likewise, the action researchers would continually preform the hermeneutical circle from reflection to action and back to reflection to action, collecting data and reflecting on its meaning, preforming interviews, questionnaires, pre- and post-test surveys in the church association meetings. Further, this project engaged by attending Bible studies, preaching and teaching, and observation at every phase of this project. The reason why we chose this approach is because it was the most suitable and less threatening approach for the African-American community. This approach also was chosen because we did not want to burden this community and seem to betray their trusting by being more intrusive and aggressive.

Implementation

The project began over the summer of 2018. The calendar below was based on this timeline. The project calendar plan included getting the necessary permission from program participants and United Theological Seminary to move forward with research. The proposed project began in late summer and encompassed a four to six-week project cycle based on the availability of all participants.

The first phase of the project gathered a research team to assist with the logistics and developing the pre-test and post-test survey instruments. Much of this work was done with context associates, relying on their skill level and their willingness to provide support. The context associates received training and instruction on their roles in preparing for workshops, passing out and collecting surveys, workshop set up area, and observations. This phase included observation of current church programs relative to the grief model. The research created an observation sheet to include time, place, participation, and skill level of the training leader.

The second phase of the research involved the recruitment of pastors, and with permission of the pastors, recruitment of lay person in preselected congregations. This included sending out invitations requesting their participation. The invites were followed up with a personal call for participants and a more in-depth dialogue on the importance of the research. Each of the pastors and lay leaders that consented to assist in the research received a sample explanation and purpose of the interview questions. Those requiring more assistance received personal assistance from the researcher.

The third phase of the research was a reflective part of the research because the research team engaged in dialogues, examining the needs gathered from the surveys. This

process helped me to focus on developing the workshops to meet the various pastoral care needs brought to light by interviewing the pastors and lay leaders. I met with the team members and other participants to review the workshop, ensuring that we were all on board with our assignments. During this phase of the research, a calendar of training dates and times was set, working with the pastors and lay leaders to utilize facilities based on availability. I completed this phase within two-weeks from the beginning of the training calendar and worked with participating churches based on their availability. Immediately following the workshops and training, the post-test was given to the participants and the data collected before moving to the next phase.

The fourth phase of the project was processing the data collected through observation and pre-test and post-test surveys. The data was utilized to compile productive feedback to pastors and lay leaders in assistance with their congregations. This information included comparative data based on church size and potential areas for growth. This also included a listening opportunity for the researcher to compile additional voices to the need for pastoral care in the service of the Lord.

The fifth phase included next steps for creating a best practices model that would assist other churches in meeting the needs of the congregations. Identifying ways to expand the model to encompass more churches and increase the territory of pastoral care among African-American church cultures.

Summary of Learning

There were many lessons learned by the participants and me from this project. First, we learned that grief and loss is experienced in children as well as adults. We

learned that grief and loss does not go away on its own. An individual who has experienced it needs professional, expertise and assistance. Grief and loss must be addressed so that the community of faith can be healed holistically and spiritually. Similarly, we learned that many of the same problems that existed in the thirteen churches surveyed was the result of neglect and shame. We learned and discussed how mental illness in the church and community was not being address because of the shame factor in the African-American Church. Moreover, we learned that seeking counseling and therapy was not a sign of weakness or defeat, but it is necessary to confront so that walls would not remain preventing growth and productivity.

Second, we learned that some problems cannot be solved solely from within. Sometimes, we need to look outside of the community of faith to address issues that require trained professional. Further, we learned that problems do not go away with concerted effort beyond preaching, teaching, and prayer.

Third, we learned from our studies and preaching that the Bible places emphasis on the theology of grief and loss. When we explored several passages that reveal how God views these issues, the participants were encouraged to engage in the healing process more readily. Lastly, our hypothesis was right on point and well established, showing that when we equipped the pastors and their staffs to provide pastoral care ministries, this would greatly increase the opportunities for healing from crisis due to grief and loss within the congregation and our community of faith.

Conclusion

This project was rewarding and successful in many aspects. The evidence suggests that everyone needs support, reassurance, and some education and information following grief and loss. This may be provided by family, friends, or clergy in an informal way, by laypeople in similar circumstances, by a community support group, or by health professionals. Health professionals have a responsibility to offer support, to inform the bereaved of additional resources in the community and to monitor their progress and make referrals to mental health professionals as appropriate.

There is no evidence that all bereaved people need or want formal interventions, though mutual support groups may fill a gap for those who have little other social support. There is some evidence to suggest that intervention programs help people to move faster through the grieving process, but ultimately most people get through it regardless of whether they have formal support.

First, the biblical foundations, historical foundations, and the theoretical foundations were well received by the participants. This project provided theological support and assurance for five congregations that are implementing Pastoral Care Ministries in their congregations. From the preparation for this study to the parting from the community, this project was not only well received and preformed, resulting in the five churches developing crises care ministry based on the awareness of this project as well as the project itself.

Though there remains room for establishing policy for referring members who suffered loss, I developed a list of community resources and sites to address issues that are beyond the scope and resources of the crises care ministries. I recommend that

members of each church be provided with such community resources, and that the issues and concerns of crises care ministry be included in the preaching and teaching curriculum of all ministries of the church.

It is my prayer and hope to have this project published soon after my defense of this project, so that I may provide copies of it to each of the five churches at greatly reduced and affordable prices, as well as providing published works at the various conventions across the nation. Not only is this work valuable for future work, but also it is vital for the holistic and spiritual survival of marginalized and majority communities of faith. It is my prayer that this project falls in the hands of many pastors and church leaders, and that scholars would take the time to read this project and address the issues and concerns in this work.

APPENDIX A
ANTICIPATED LEARNINGS

Anticipated Learnings

The workshop was preceded with a pre-survey and followed with a corresponding post-survey aimed at determining the extent of learning and possible changes in position that has occurred because of the workshops. The survey implemented was to be versatile version in collaborations with my professional associates and the leadership team. Nevertheless, below are examples of the learning I am hoping to achieve in the ministry project which will be the basis for the pre-/post-test surveys.

- The role of the congregation when helping persons through grief and loss.
- Understanding the stages of grief and loss.
- Understanding that grief and loss is not limited to the death of a loved one. It can also involve the loss of a spouse through divorce, loss of job, and the like.
- Understanding the meaning of crisis ministry and congregational roles in managing them.

These items listed above will be the basis for my pre/post survey questions and need to be flush out more with leadership.

The following is a sample of the Pre- and Post-questions asked before and after the workshop to determine the effectiveness of the information given.

APPENDIX B
PASTORAL CARE SURVEY

Pastoral Care Survey

1. How many years of ministry experience do you have?
 - A. 0-2
 - B. 3-5
 - C. 6-10
 - D. 10-15
 - E. 15+

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - A. BA, BS
 - B. MABS (or equivalent)
 - C. MDIV, Th.M. (or equivalent)
 - D. Ph.D., Th.D. (or equivalent)
 - E. D.Min.
 - F. Other

3. What is the size of the church congregation you currently serve?
 - A. 0 - 99
 - B. 100 - 199
 - C. 200 - 999
 - D. 1000 -2999
 - E. 3000 – 9999
 - F. 10,000 +

4. Other than the senior pastor, does your church have a ministerial staff member who handle pastoral care issues?

Yes
No

Please use the following scale to rate questions 5-7 by circling the number that most accurately represents your feelings regarding the question.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. My seminary education has prepared me to adequately deal with the following Pastoral Care needs:

A. Benevolence	1 2 3 4 5
B. Church discipline	1 2 3 4 5
C. Counseling /Counseling referrals	1 2 3 4 5
D. Crisis resolution	1 2 3 4 5
E. Death (visits, funerals, aftercare)	1 2 3 4 5

F. Prayer

G. Physical needs (Hospitalization, illness & disease) 1 2 3 4 5

H. Spiritual Crisis 1 2 3 4 5

I. Training Lay Ministers (to assist in pastoral care needs) 1 2 3 4 5

7. My pastoral experience has prepared me to adequately deal with the following Pastoral Care needs:

A. Benevolence 1 2 3 4 5

B. Church discipline 1 2 3 4 5

C. Counseling/Counseling referrals 1 2 3 4 5

D. Crisis resolution 1 2 3 4 5

E. Death (visits, funerals, aftercare) 1 2 3 4 5

F. Prayer 1 2 3 4 5

G. Physical needs (hospitalization, illness & disease) 1 2 3 4 5

H. Spiritual Crisis 1 2 3 4 5

I. Training Lay ministers (to assist in pastoral care needs) 1 2 3 4 5

8. The top three areas I would have liked more training in seminary regarding pastoral Care would be (choose only three):

A. Benevolence

B. Church discipline

C. Counseling/Counseling referrals

D. Crisis resolution

E. Death (visit, bereavement, aftercare)

F. Prayer

G. Physical needs (hospitalization, illness & disease)

H. Spiritual crisis

I. Training Lay ministers (to assist in Pastoral care needs)

9. In my opinion, pastoral care is most effective when done by:

A. The pastors or other ministers

B. Lay people

C. Professionals (Licensed professional counselors, chaplains, etc.)

D. Trained church members

E. A combination of the above

10. Approximately what percentage of pastoral care is done by staff and what percent is done by members in your church?

- A. Staff 100% / Members 0%
- B. Staff 75% / Members 25%
- C. Staff 50% / Members 50%
- D. Staff 25% / Members 75%
- E. Staff 0% / Members 100%

11. Please indicate your current church affiliation.

- A. Baptist (Southern)
- B. Baptist (Independent)
- C. United Methodist
- D. Presbyterian PCA
- E. Presbyterian (USA)
- F. Bible/ Nondenominational
- G. Other (please specify)

12. I feel well equipped to address the pastoral or congregational care needs in my church.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

These questions will be helpful for capturing an overview of how the participants understand congregational approach to Pastoral Care because the overall theme focuses on how vitally critical the caregiving is to congregational life. The interview responses from the clergypersons and lay leaders would serve as the basis for qualitatively measuring their levels of awareness of the role that Pastoral Care plays within their congregations. It would also provide an overview of their openness to thinking differently about the seriousness of congregational care.

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